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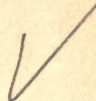
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The Retreat Manual

A HANDBOOK FOR THE
ANNUAL RETREAT AND MONTHLY
RECOLLECTION

BY

MADAME CECILIA

Religious of St. Andrew's Convent, Streatham

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.

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With a Preface by

THE REV. SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

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Dedication.

TO OUR BELOVED REVEREND MOTHER-
GENERAL, MADAME MARIE PEETERS, THIS LITTLE
BOOK IS DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR AS A
MARK OF ESTEEM, AFFECTION AND
GRATITUDE.

COVENTRY HALL, STREATHAM,
May, 1901.

Preface.

THIS little volume will be a welcome addition to our Retreat literature. When the points of a Retreat are given by an experienced director, book explanations are less necessary, though even then they are a useful supplement to the oral instructions. But, for the many who have to make their retreats or monthly recollections alone, or with only occasional help from a director, some such book as the author has now provided is indispensable. It does not give a series of meditations, but treats of the more fundamental principles of the spiritual life, which it expounds clearly and simply. But the special feature of the book, for which it will be prized, is to be found in the lists of "Practical Hints," which terminate the several chapters. These, unlike the dry bones which satisfied former generations, as points for self-examination, take some account of the complexities of human character and motive, and are the more practical because they are so fresh and life-like. That they should be marked also by soundness of judgment was what one might have expected from the author of "HOME TRUTHS FOR MARY'S CHILDREN."

SYDNEY F. SMITH, S.J.

Feast of the Precious Blood, 1901.



Table of Contents.

PREFACE	PAGE V.
-------------------	------------

CHAPTER I.—EVE OF THE RETREAT.

1. What is a Retreat?	I
2. Whom God calls into Retreat .	11
3. The Dispositions required to make a good Retreat	17
4. Hints on Meditation	25

CHAPTER II.—EMPLOYMENT OF TIME IN RETREAT.

1. Order of the Day	34
2. Daily Examination of Conscience during Retreat	36
3. How to employ Free Time dur- ing Retreat	38
4. On Recreation during Retreat .	39

CHAPTER III.—SELF KNOWLEDGE.

1. On the Besetting Sin	43
2. Outlines of Typical Characters .	50
3. On Making Resolutions	62
4. Signs of Spiritual Progress . .	67
5. Progressive Steps in Virtue . .	72

TABLE OF CONTENTS

vi

PAGE

CHAPTER IV.—ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1. On Confession	82
2. Examination of Conscience for those who confess frequently .	88
3. Reflections and Affections before Confession (after self-examina- tion)	91
4. Rules to observe after having fallen into Sin	101

CHAPTER V.—THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

1. On Wedded Life	104
2. Labourers in God's Vineyard .	114
3. Signs of a Religious Vocation .	127
4. On Scrupulosity	136
5. On Prayer	144
6. On Temptation	157
7. Hints on Mortification	163

CHAPTER VI.—MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE.

1. The Monthly Recollection . .	168
2. The Spiritual Warfare	170
3. The Particular Examination .	174
4. Our Daily Work	178
5. On Extreme Unction	180
6. Affections and Reflections in Preparation for Death	191
7. An Act of Spiritual Communion	199
8. Rule of Life	203

CHAPTER I.

I. WHAT IS A RETREAT?

AFTER a long and severe campaign a good general gives his wearied soldiers a rest. Repairs are needed in the army equipments, provisions must be stored up and above all, the future campaign must be planned. Perhaps the last has been disastrous, then the general examines the causes and endeavours to remedy them. Often his own blunders may be a salutary though bitter lesson and the foes' tactics sometimes give him useful hints. He sees how he allowed himself to be drawn too far from his base, or the lines of defence were too long. Here he gave the enemy a chance of cutting off his supplies, there he left a weak point undefended. Suppose the campaign has been glorious, then he examines the causes of his success and

proposes to adopt the same strategy in future. "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." * Shall we not learn a useful lesson from their example?

You are on the eve of your retreat, reader, and is there not a strong resemblance between the general, retiring into winter quarters, and what you propose doing? You are or *should be* the general of your senses and faculties, your foes are the world, the flesh, and the devil, with whom you have to wage an incessant warfare. They are your implacable enemies with whom you can make neither truce nor treaty. Let us suppose that you have been striving "to fight the good fight," that you are in earnest about saving your soul. As you look back over the months or years since your last retreat, you will probably see that there have been losses, indecisive battles and some victories. In retreat you examine what led to these different results, in order to gain that knowledge which

* St. Luke xvi.

comes only from experience, for it has been aptly said "One thorn of experience is worth a whole wilderness of learning." We reflect on past defects and "knowledge comes" while "wisdom lingers" to enable us to fight more warily in the future.

It is wise to go into retreat that we may review and repair the past. We have also to prepare our plan and spiritual weapons for the future. As we glance back, how many defeats we notice, how often we have committed sins, what numerous imperfections have marred even our best actions, how frequently we have fallen through imprudence and negligence. Can the most earnest Christian dare to say "My heart is clean I am pure from sin?"* Must he not on the contrary confess, "My sin is ever before me?"

Perhaps, reader, you are forced to admit that you have basely deserted your colours and served in the ranks of the enemy. If you are conscious that you are in a state

* Prov. xx.

of mortal sin, if you have merited God's reproach "My people hath forgotten me days without number,"* then how much need you have of this retreat in order to make your peace with God.

It is good for all to think "upon the days of old," and to obey God's command when He bids us "Remember all the way through which the Lord thy God hath brought thee."† As we pass in review our own conduct, the devil's strategy which has so often decoyed us into his traps and further, when we reflect on God's past mercies, we are stirred up to repair the past and to plan wisely our future campaign. Experience alone teaches wisdom, which we can only learn at our own expense. How is it that time "the subtle thief" who steals on his wing the years of all men, does not bring wisdom to all? The truth is that we do not obtain knowledge merely by perceiving a sensation, but by reflecting on what we have experienced. We note the stages, we investigate

* Jer. ii.

† Deut. viii.

the causes, and draw conclusions which we endeavour to justify by subsequent experiments, thus knowledge is acquired. "This painful occupation hath God given to the children of men to be exercised therein." Truly, "the eyes of a wise man are in his head," while, "the fool walketh in darkness"* because he never reflects.

During these days of retreat therefore, your great work is to examine the past, to repair the breaches, and then to draw up your plans for the future. We legislate for what we foresee, and prepare for any emergency as far as possible. But these advantages, great as they are, are not the only benefits we reap from making a good retreat.

These days of prayer and solitude bring us nearer to our divine Master. They are spent in His company, and we may hear our Lord's invitation addressed to each individually. "Come apart into a desert place and rest a little."†

Jesus went with His disciples into that

* Ecclestes. i.

† Mark vi.

desert, and certainly the apostles could say in the fulness of their joy at being with their divine Master, "It is good for us to be here."

You, too, are now with Jesus, He will speak to your inmost soul. You will meditate on the great truths of our holy religion, you will ponder over the mysteries of our Lord's life and death and as you draw near to Him in prayer He will come nearer to you. He will reveal to you the things that are for your peace. Look back on your past retreats. Has not each one given you a more intimate knowledge of the Sacred Heart of Jesus? Hence you may rest assured that in this retreat some special graces are also reserved for you, graces which will enable you to know God better, to realise more vividly His infinite mercy and love; and does not Jesus tell us, "This is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God?"* Thus a retreat is an apprenticeship for Heaven where eternally we shall contemplate God's perfections.

* St. John xvii.

Not only will this retreat teach you to know God better, but it will teach you to know yourself "In thy light we shall see light." When the Holy Spirit, in answer to earnest prayer, sends forth His rays of divine illumination into the soul, how the thoughts of many hearts are revealed! Self-knowledge is indispensable if we would lead a Christian life, and he who dares not look his own shortcomings in the face, will never make progress in virtue "Know thyself," is a maxim of the ancient philosophers and as a tree is known by its fruit, so we may acquire self-knowledge by considering attentively our thoughts, words and deeds.

Perhaps this retreat will bring you one of those special graces which God reserves for privileged souls. In retreat Saint Ignatius received the plan of his Spiritual Exercises which have wrought such miracles of conversion and sanctification. In retreat most founders of religious orders received their divine mission. How many who are now consecrated to God, heard in

a retreat the voice of the Master calling them to leave all and follow Him. Are you in doubt about your future path? Do you sometimes think that you are called to give up all for God? Make this retreat seriously, and ask our Lord to speak to your soul so distinctly that the uncertainty may cease. Perhaps your vocation is already decided, there is no election to make, and you have tried to serve God faithfully in the path of duty in spite of frequent falls. To you a still small voice may say, "I shew you a more excellent way."* You may see that God wills you to apply yourself with all the energy of your soul to acquire some special virtue. He wills perhaps that you should devote yourself more zealously to save souls, that you should make more strenuous efforts to attain humility or charity. No prayer is ever unanswered, and if we pray earnestly "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God," we may be certain to hear an answer interiorly from our loving

* 1 Cor. xii.

Father's lips. Since, "This is the will of God even your sanctification," He will shew us what practical resolutions we must take in order to obey His commands.

We may also look at a retreat in another light ; as a preparation for death, that king of terrors whom none can resist, and whom all dread. What makes death so terrible that even some of the greatest saints, much as they desired to see God face to face, have trembled at the thought? Is it not because we know that after death the judgment comes? The sentence and punishments of the all just Judge are to be feared by His sinful creatures. Now Saint Paul tells us, "if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged," that is to say, we avert God's punishments when we examine our conscience and confess our sins with a contrite heart. This is precisely what we try to do in retreat.

Perhaps in a few days or weeks God may call you hence. This may be your last retreat. Then, as you lie on your death bed you will rejoice to think that

you gave up your time to make this preparation for death, that you made a really good confession. There will not be such a long reckoning to make then if accounts are made up now. These are days of preparation for eternity and this thought will help you to make your retreat well.

We have seen how God complained of old "My people hath forgotten Me days without number," yet they found time for work and for pleasure, for sloth and for sin. Each year we spend days, weeks, and perhaps months solely for our pleasure, in which too often sin has abounded. We have satisfied our senses at the expense of the purity of our soul. There have been whole days devoted to the world, the flesh, and the devil. To make this retreat we give up some lawful pleasure, we sacrifice a few days of our holiday time for God. We mortify our senses by silence and recollection, endeavouring to keep our thoughts on God, and we do this of our own free will. Our loving Father cannot fail to look favourably on us as He did on

the Ninivites of old when, "they put on sackcloth and proclaimed a fast . . . saying, Who can tell if God will turn and forgive?" "And God had mercy with regard to the evil which He had said He would do unto them and He did it not."*

So, if the curb of the order of the day mortifies us, if time seems to hang on our hands, we will offer it as a voluntary penance for all the hours we have wasted in the pursuit of our own evil inclinations, and this thought will help us to be generous with God.

2. WHOM GOD CALLS INTO RETREAT.

1. God calls the "*fervent in spirit*;" for them a retreat is necessary that they may retain their fervour; just as a fire dies out if not supplied with fuel in time, so even the fervent soul becomes careless and languid, unless it receives some fresh spiritual aliment. To earnest Christians such a retreat is a source of light and grace, for to "him that hath shall be given,"

* Jonas iii.

They will be enabled “to renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”* In all religious houses it is customary to make at least one yearly retreat, and the inmates feel their need of these days of recollection. If this be true for those whose lives are consecrated to God and whose days are spent in almost one continual prayer, how much more is it necessary for those fervent Christians who have to live amidst the dangers of the world?

2. The *workers* in God’s vineyard have need to rest awhile in the company of Jesus. Saint Luke tells us that our Saviour, “calling together the twelve Apostles . . . sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” They set forth on their mission and having fulfilled our Saviour’s command, came back to Him to give an account of their labours. We read, “the Apostles when they were returned, told Him all they had done, and taking

* Is. xl.

them He went aside into a desert place apart.* We can picture them in the solitude of the wilderness pressing close round their beloved Master, and listening to His divine words. We seem to hear them tell Him, as the seventy-two disciples did later, "Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy Name." Jesus sees there is a danger that pride may find entrance into their souls and He replies gently; "Behold, I have given you power to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and upon all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. But yet rejoice not in this that spirits are subject unto you; but rejoice in this, that your names are written in Heaven."† Thus in the "desert place" Jesus warns his Apostles of a danger.

We know that oftentimes the Apostles were so pressed by the crowd that "they had not so much as time to eat." So now, the labourers in the vineyard often have to sacrifice their hours of rest and prayer for the good of others. But if it be true that

* St. Luke ix.

† St. Luke x.

“work is prayer,” it is also true that work can never entirely supply the place of prayer. The lamp will flicker and die out when it lacks oil, so the Christian worker must fill his soul with the grace of God, if his labours are to be fruitful. He must give of his abundance, and it is in retreat that he will find stores of light and strength. There, he can prepare his spiritual offensive and defensive arms. If Saint Paul feared to neglect mortification lest he himself “should become a castaway,” how much more should we fear to neglect prayer without which we cannot remain united to Christ?

3. If God calls the fervent soul and the Christian worker into a “desert place apart,” surely there is a greater need for *tepid souls* to withdraw into solitude. In retreat the Master’s voice will perhaps be heard saying reproachfully, “You did run well, who hath hindered you that you should not obey the truth?”* In Holy Scripture we read these very solemn words of our

* Gal. v.

Heavenly Father, "I know thy works, thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot, but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."* How few there are who are not lukewarm at least, as regards certain obligations. In retreat we examine our past conduct, and provided only we have a good will, God will not fail to enlighten us. It will need courage to listen to the reproach of our loving Master when He says, "Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I find not thy works full before my God."†

Notice how fully Jesus credits the soul with "the good things that remain." All is not lost, the past can be repaired. As we read our resolutions of the last retreat, we shall doubtless see which of our works "are not full before God." With humility we will receive our Master's warning, "I have somewhat against thee because thou hast left thy first charity : Be mindful

* Apoc. iii. † Apoc. iii.

therefore from whence thou art fallen : and do penance and do the first works.”*

4. Lastly, God calls those who are *dead in sin* to retire into a desert place, that they may realise their sad condition. For souls in mortal sin, a retreat is a means of resurrection. The prophet Ezechiel in a vision saw, “a plain that was full of bones.” God led him “through them on every side . . . and they were exceeding dry.” Then He questioned His prophet, “Son of man, dost thou think these bones shall live?” “To which Ezechiel replied, “O Lord God thou knowest.” “And God raised up the dead bones, and the spirit came into them and they lived.” In like manner, to those who are dead in sin and who complain, “Our bones are dried up, and hope is lost, and we are cut off,” the promises of God are made : “Behold I will send spirit into you and you shall live. . . . Behold I will open your graves and bring you out of your sepulchres, O my people.”†

* Apoc. ii. † Exec. xxxvii.

How many miracles of resurrection has God worked by means of missions and retreats ! There the soul receives grace to make a good confession, to break the chain of some bad habit that holds it in fetters. Here too the spiritually blind receive their sight, and the Good Shepherd seeks that which was lost. As the sinner meditates on the great truths, and contemplates Jesus our Saviour hanging on the cross for our redemption, the voice of God reaches his inmost soul, and the world's enchanting spell is broken. He realises something of the "sinfulness of sin," and determines, with God's help, to repent and amend.

3. THE DISPOSITIONS REQUIRED TO MAKE A GOOD RETREAT.

Our retreat will be profitable in proportion to our good dispositions. The proverb, "God helps those who help themselves," holds good with reference to spiritual affairs. Hence, if we would profit fully by this spiritual time of grace, we must endeavour to cultivate certain dispositions in our soul.

These dispositions are:—1, Exterior and interior recollection; 2, Docility to the voice of God; 3, Generosity; 4, Confidence; 5, Calmness; 6, Courage. Let us consider each briefly.

1. *Exterior recollection.* In the round of daily duties our minds are full of temporal concerns. We are “troubled about many things.” Perhaps, reader, you have to earn your own living, then you must exert yourself to find employment, to give satisfaction to your employers, and to provide for the future, when your health may fail. All these thoughts are a preoccupation, and they are to a certain extent willed by God, since prudent forethought is a duty. Suppose now that your income is assured, and that you are independent, even then you have preoccupations. Riches may take to themselves wings, the home must be looked after, your health is perhaps failing, or those dear to you are in trouble. In the course of a single day what a multitude of thoughts pass through our mind, chiefly about our ordinary occupa-

tions. In retreat we must leave these thoughts on one side, and think of the important affair of our salvation. For this is *the great work* of our lives, and the performance of our daily duty is but *a means* to this end. To make a retreat, we generally leave home, and giving up our customary occupations and amusements, we keep silence, and endeavour to watch over our senses, that we may be able to fix our mind on the eternal truths. We try to avoid all exterior distractions in order to be *interiorly recollected*, and like Mary, we sit at the feet of Jesus, and listen to Him. As far as possible our thoughts must be concentrated on the truths of our holy religion, and the needs of our soul. If distractions come, we must reject them, or make them the subject of our prayers. Thus, if some real anxiety is weighing upon us, we should not pass the days of retreat in meditating on our sorrow, but each time it comes into our mind we can say, "My God, I abandon this trouble to Thee, knowing that Thou wilt help me in all my

difficulties." It is not easy to be recollected, but provided we have a good will, and do our best, God will do the rest.

2. *Docility* to the voice of God is the second disposition. Interior recollection prepares our soul to hear His voice, but when we hear it we must be ready to obey. God may also ask us for some sacrifice ; to give up a bad habit, to renounce a dangerous friendship, or to make up a quarrel. You would have serious cause for thinking that your retreat was not well made if God did not ask you to do something for love of Him. Hence, since you desire to profit by these precious moments of grace, let your prayer be: "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready."

3. *Generosity* comes next. To be generous with God means to give more than we are actually obliged ; to give freely without counting our toil and pain. The cry of a generous soul is, "I will not offer to the Lord my God holocausts free-cost." We have so many motives for being generous. Has He not given us with profusion all

the natural gifts we enjoy? How many spiritual graces He has showered upon us! For us Jesus gave His Precious Blood, and daily continues to offer Himself in the Holy Mass.

Again, it is wiser to be generous, for he who only gives just sufficient, risks not giving enough. We do not like to go on a journey knowing that we have only *exactly* the price of our railway ticket. How mean it is of a Christian to bargain with God. Be sure that if He asks for a very great sacrifice, He will give you a very great grace that you may be able to make it.

4. *Confidence* is a very important disposition. We must begin and continue our retreat with the firm conviction that God will give us all the necessary graces, that He has called us near Him in order to help us. Special graces for our particular needs are awaiting us; light to see the way wherein we should walk, graces of contrition for the past, strength to do better in the future. One great means of obtaining

confidence is to meditate on our Lord's infinite charity, and during these few days, we must strive to think far more of God than of ourselves. We must look on our Divine Model, and endeavour to reproduce some of His virtues in our daily life. One earnest act of contrition, together with a firm confidence in the goodness of God, will help us on in the path of virtue, whereas hours spent in useless lamentations and self-pitying introspection weaken the soul. How can we distrust our Heavenly Father when we think of His loving promise? "I will feed My sheep: and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord God, I will seek that which was lost: and that which was driven away, I will bring again, and I will bind up that which was broken, and I will strengthen that which was weak, and that which was fat and strong I will preserve: and I will feed them in judgment."* This confidence in God keeps the soul in perfect peace.

5. It is essential in order to make a good

* Ezec. xxxiv.

retreat that we should be *calm*. Various causes might disturb our peace of mind. Those who are making their first retreat generally get frightened; they do not know what is coming next, perhaps they never saw themselves before in such an unfavourable light, and this troubles them. Others are scrupulous, and they lose their peace of mind at the thought of going to confession. They spend the hours in self-examination, rather than in meditation on the truths proposed. One great secret for being calm is to occupy ourselves with each exercise as it comes, and not worry ourselves about the next. Remember that it is the devil's work to trouble souls that are earnestly trying to serve God, whereas our Lord's action on such souls is peaceful. So try to put aside all subjects that might disturb your peace, and when the temptation comes to be disquieted and uneasy, say earnestly, "O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant us Thy peace."

6. Finally, we need *courage* to face self and solitude, to banish worldly concerns,

and give ourselves up to prayer and mortification. It is not pleasant to have to convict ourselves of those very faults which we blame in others. It is difficult to pray when we are feeling wooden. It needs courage to resist temptations of ennui, sadness, sentimental dreaminess, discouragement, and dissipation. God knows this, and He will help us, provided we do our best. Heaven is the prize if we succeed in the Christian race, and for this pearl of great price no sacrifice is too great.

As you read these lines on the dispositions which should be in the soul that enters into retreat, does the discouraging thought come, "I have not these dispositions"? This is neither astonishing nor unusual. Do not be disheartened: perhaps you have some in germ, so to say, and you would fain have the others. Then in all simplicity tell our loving Saviour how much you need them; ask Him to implant them in your soul. Remember that God is the Creator who can do much with very little, and if that little be missing, He can supply it.

(3.) HINTS ON MEDITATION.*

Many earnest Christians are afraid of meditation. We constantly hear people complain that they cannot meditate. Probably they have never studied any method of mental prayer, and thus they exaggerate the difficulty. Meditation consists in occupying ourselves mentally and prayerfully with some mystery of the Faith. We call to mind the chief facts, ponder over them, and then stir up our will to regulate our conduct in consequence. Hence, meditation is an exercise of the faculties of our soul, memory, understanding, and will. Some persons are also aided by the imagination; to others it is a hindrance. Have you ever received an affront that cut you to the quick? Then, doubtless, you meditated on it for an hour or more. Memory recalled the facts, imagination supplied extra details and false colouring, the intelligence discussed the motives, such as ingratitude, jealousy,

* These Hints on Meditation are taken from the Author's book, "At the Feet of Jesus."

pride, it considered the baseness and the unexpectedness of the insult; finally, the will took a firm resolution to avoid that person or to retaliate. Now what was all this but a meditation in which you employed all the powers of your soul? Moreover, it was probably made without a single distraction, which is of very rare occurrence when we meditate on a mystery of our Holy Faith.

Unfortunately, the subject was not well chosen, but at least it may help you to understand that you are capable of making a meditation. Suppose that, instead of reflecting on a personal affront, you had chosen for subject the insults received by our Lord at the court of Herod. You pictured out the scene, recalled the facts, pondered them over, weighed the motives, and then stirred yourself up to imitate your divine model. This would have been an excellent meditation. Now it is true that the Holy Ghost is the Great Master who teaches us how to pray, but this does not dispense us from employing the means

placed at our disposal. The masters of the spiritual life have traced out methods of mental prayer for their disciples. The one laid down by St. Ignatius, in his "Spiritual Exercises," is perhaps the best known. It consists of three parts: (1) preparation, (2) meditation proper, (3) exercise of the affections. Each of these parts is subdivided, and a few words on them may be useful to the reader.

I.—PREPARATION. Read over the subject of the meditation carefully, or listen to the points if a priest is giving you the retreat. This can be done either the previous evening or immediately before commencing the meditation. Then place yourself in the presence of God; stand (if convenient) and reflect on the truth, that God sees into your inmost soul; kneel and make an act of faith, and an act of adoration with all the intensity of your inmost being.

These acts need not occupy more than two minutes. They have for object to prepare you by devout recollection to commune with God.

First Prelude.—This is an exercise of the imagination which you can omit if you do not find it helpful. Picture to yourself some scene connected with the mystery which forms the subject of your meditation.

Second Prelude.—Ask for a grace in keeping with the mystery on which you intend to meditate. Thus, if you have chosen the Passion of our Lord, pray for a deep hatred of sin, or a perfect contrition.

The proximate preparation is now finished, and you need not give more than three or four minutes to it. Now pass on to the second part.

II.—THE MEDITATION. Here we consider the subject carefully and devoutly. If you have for subject some maxim of our Lord, think when, where, and why He uttered it. See what lessons you can learn from it, and how far your conduct is at variance with the precept. Take a practical resolution to amend. Determine some definite act of the virtue in question. However, in retreat we are not required to make a fresh resolution after each meditation ;

it often happens that several successive meditations will suggest the same resolution.

In this part of the meditation avoid spending all the time in reflections, since they are a means, not an end. Their great object is to stir up your will to do some good action, and to serve as a solid foundation for your resolutions. The most important part of meditation is the exercise of the affections, and all the preceding steps should lead up to this essential point.

III.—COLLOQUY. This is a direct prayer, so make acts of faith, hope, charity, etc., as they are suggested by the subject of your meditation. This part of the meditation should occupy at least one-fifth of the whole time allotted to the exercise. Finish by the *Offering of Resolutions*. You can use a set form, or your own words. Then as a reminder of your meditation choose a *Spiritual Bouquet*, that is some thought which bears on the subject, and which you can recall when tempted to break your resolution. Finish by reciting some vocal

prayer, such as the "Our Father," or *Anima Christi*.

This is a brief exposition of St. Ignatius' method of meditation. It may seem complicated at first, but constant use simplifies it. Just a few words of warning in conclusion.

1. Do not expect to succeed the first time you ask a meditation ; or, if the novelty of the exercise attracts you, and it seems very easy, do not underrate the difficulties and imagine that you know how to meditate.

2. When you find sufficient food for reflection, and affections in one point, do not be in a hurry to pass on to the next.

3. Remember that there are times of spiritual desolation when mental prayer is very difficult. This is not a reason for neglecting or curtailing your meditation. Try to fix your attention, and say some vocal prayers to obtain the grace you desire ; humble yourself before God. Above all do not be discouraged ; God asks for your efforts, the success does not depend on you.

4. Take a respectful posture, but not an uncomfortable one, which would cause distractions. It is usual to kneel in the beginning, and at the end.

5. Should you employ a book, you are not obliged to use the thoughts suggested in the colloquies ; those that come to you naturally are far more helpful.

6. In choosing your resolution, base it on some well-grounded motive, endeavour to foresee when and how you can put it into practice.

These few hints must suffice, as our space is limited, but those who desire further information on the subject can consult the method of meditation by Père Roothan, S.J., or any other similar work.

PREPARATORY PRAYER

ACT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

My God, I firmly believe that Thou art everywhere present and seest all things. Thou seest my nothingness, my incon-

stancy, my sinfulness. Thou seest me in all my actions : Thou seest me in this my meditation. I bow down before Thee, and worship Thy Divine Majesty with my whole being. Cleanse my heart from all vain, wicked, and distracting thoughts. Enlighten my understanding, and inflame my will, that I may pray with reverence, attention, and devotion.

PRAYER.

O God, my Lord and my Creator, look graciously on Thy child, the work of Thy hands, and mercifully grant me the help of Thy grace, that all my intentions and acts during this meditation may be directed purely to the service and praise of Thy Divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord.

OFFERING OF THE RESOLUTIONS.

My God, I offer Thee these resolutions. Unless Thou deignest to bless them, I cannot be faithful to them. From Thy goodness, then, I hope to obtain this blessing

which I ask of Thee in the name and through the merits of Jesus, my Divine Saviour.

Holy Virgin, Mother of my God, who art also my Mother, my good Angel, and my holy patron Saints, obtain for me the grace to keep these resolutions with perfect fidelity.

EXAMEN AFTER EACH MEDITATION.

1. Did I pray for grace to make it well?
2. Did I listen carefully to the points?
3. Have I applied them to my needs?
4. What special thought has most touched me?
5. How far is my conduct in accordance with the truths on which I have been meditating?
6. What means must I take to amend?
7. Did I finish my meditation by a fervent prayer?

It is important to note down any thoughts that strike us. These interior lights are helps to each soul individually.

CHAPTER II.

I.—ORDER OF THE DAY.

THESE schemes are intended as a help for those who may be making either a private or a public retreat.

TIME TABLE, SCHEME A.

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 7.0 | Rise. |
| 7.30 | Morning Prayers. Holy Mass. |
| 8.15 | Breakfast. Free Time. |
| 9.0 | <i>Meditation.</i> |
| 10.0 | Free Time. |
| 11.0 | Way of the Cross. |
| 11.30 | <i>Meditation</i> or Conference. |
| 12.30 | Dinner. |
| 1.0 | Recreation (in silence if preferred.) |
| 2.0 | Rosary. |
| 2.15 | Free Time. |
| 3.0 | <i>Conference</i> or <i>Meditation.</i> |
| 4.0 | Visit to the Blessed Sacrament,
devotions and hymns. |

- 4.30 Tea.
- 4.50 Rosary.
- 5.10 Free Time.
- 6.0 *Meditation.*
- 7.0 Benediction.
- 7.30 Supper.
- 8.0 Free Time.
- 8.15 Rosary, Night Prayers, Examination of Conscience.

TIME TABLE, SCHEME B.

- 6.30 Rise.
- 7.0 *Meditation.*
- 7.30 Holy Mass.
- 8.15 Breakfast.
- 8.40 Free Time.
- 9.30 *Meditation.*
- 10.30 Rosary. Free Time.
- 11.30 *Meditation.*
- 12.30 Rosary. Examination of Conscience.
- 1.0 Dinner.
- 1.35 Recreation (or free time).
- 2.30 Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.
Rosary.

- 3.0 Free Time.
 - 3.30 *Conference.*
 - 4.30 Free Time.
 - 5.0 Tea.
 - 5.30 Way of the Cross. Free Time.
 - 6.0 *Meditation.*
 - 7.0 Benediction.
 - 7.30 Supper. Free Time.
 - 8.10 *Points of Meditation* for the next day, evening prayers. Examination of Conscience.
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2.—DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE DURING RETREAT.

The surroundings in retreat are so different from those of ordinary life, that the questions which form the matter of our daily examination of conscience are of very little use. The following suggestions may be useful as a guide to the spirit in which the retreat should be made. Some of the points touched on are not exactly sins, but those who are in the habit of making retreats desire to serve God with their whole heart, and to make their retreat as perfectly as possible.

1. Have I courageously resisted temptation to be melancholy, lazy, or discouraged?
2. Have I wasted time in idle day dreams?
3. Have I been careful to observe the order of the day?
4. Have I disedified my companions by undue levity or disregard of rules?
5. Have I listened attentively to the points of the meditation?
6. Have I applied my mind to the meditations and endeavoured to pray earnestly?
7. Have I resisted temptation to think of my temporal concerns?
8. Have I tried to keep calm?
9. Have I persevered in spite of difficulties such as fatigue, ennui or aridity in prayer?
10. Have I employed the free time well?
11. Have I spoken of my difficulties in all simplicity to my confessor?
12. Have I refused to make God some sacrifice for which He asked?

13. Am I willing to take *all* the necessary means to ensure the fruit of my retreat?
 14. Have I accepted cheerfully the restrictions imposed by the rule, such as silence, privation of amusements?
 15. Have I been punctual and given the full time to each exercise?
 16. Have I spent too much time in self-retrospection, instead of meditating on our Lord's virtues?
-

3.—HOW TO EMPLOY FREE TIME DURING RETREAT.

Some persons when in retreat do not know how to employ the free time profitably. Here are a few hints on the subject:—

1. Write brief notes of the last meditation or conference, noting especially any thoughts which you particularly liked.
2. Read the life of some saint or holy person.
3. Do some manual work that does not absorb your thoughts.

4. Say your rosary walking in the garden.
 5. Read slowly and as a prayer, some of your favourite hymns.
 6. Copy out, for future use, your favourite texts of Scripture and passages of the Imitation of Christ. These will be useful in times of desolation.
 7. Make out a list of questions of self-examination suitable for your own needs. This may be useful when preparing for your ordinary confessions.
 8. Draw up a rule of life that meets your requirements.
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4.—ON RECREATION DURING RETREAT.

Those in retreat are sometimes puzzled as to what is understood by “recreation” when they see this word on the time-table, especially if the words “in silence” are added. They ask, “What may I do during that time?” “How can I amuse myself ‘in silence?’” These questions admit of dif-

ferent answers, according to whether we keep silence or not.

This is a matter of opinion ; sometimes the priest who gives the retreat prefers that absolute silence should be kept, especially if the retreat only lasts for two or three days. Others, on the contrary, insist on the retreatants taking a recreation. Often the silence is optional, and then each can do what he feels to be the best. As regards those in their teens (especially girls), it is often thought preferable that they should "disband the arc" during the recreation. A good walk, a game of tennis or croquet will relax the brain tension of the morning, and enable them to return to the exercises of the retreat with renewed ardour.

For those who are older some manual labour is recommended, or a quiet walk, while reading some edifying biography or life of saint. Or we can spend the time profitably in admiring God's works in nature. The object of the recreation is to afford a real rest to the mind. Some find

this in sleep, others prefer a quiet conversation which will naturally turn on the topics treated by the preacher.

The means must be taken to gain the end, and greater latitude is allowed during the recreation than during the free time. We may lay down the general rule that bodily exercise in some shape or form is essential in order to relieve the brain, which is actively employed during the other exercises. Since St. Ignatius wills that those who follow his method of retreat should exercise the three faculties of their soul, the first meditations are especially addressed to the intellect. Those in retreat must exercise themselves, and not be mere spectators of another's action. They must exert themselves to reflect on certain truths, and draw logical conclusions. They are not in retreat merely to contemplate certain mysteries of our faith, and to act the part of passive spectators or recipients. This implies mental application, and all the time not devoted to recreation should be employed in mental exercises or prayer.

Hence, recreation of some kind is sometimes necessary, so make up your mind at the beginning of your retreat, what relaxation you will allow yourself, taking however the precaution not to choose an occupation which would throw you into your temporal concerns and unfit you for the work you have undertaken. As a rule it is a mistake to try to spend the recreation in prayer or meditation. This would probably engender fatigue, and render the retreatant incapable of performing the afternoon exercises well.

If you are in doubt as to what is best for you, ask advice of the director of the retreat.

CHAPTER III.

I.—ON THE BESETTING SIN.

MOST people can recognise their own portrait. They generally know which pose brings out their best traits, and, when sitting for their photograph, carefully avoid taking an attitude which would call attention to certain defects. Now just as we have some good features, while others may be defective, so we have some good qualities and some bad ones in our soul. Generally we know our good points, and are often tempted to over rate them, while we avoid looking at the defective side of character and under estimate it, because we have not sufficient humility to own our faults frankly. This is evidently foolish, since ignoring them does not correct them.

Here are three reasons why we should know them.

1. It is a well-known axiom in the spiritual life that our besetting sin (or sins, for we may have more than one) is at the root of most of our faults. It is the evil which will lead to our eternal condemnation if we do not struggle against it.

2. It is the domestic traitor to whom the devil and the world appeal as to an ally, when they tempt us to sin. Though we may shut our eyes to our besetting sin, our neighbours see it clearly, just as we see theirs, and surely it concerns us to know it, more than it does them.

3. In Holy Scripture we read, "Be ye holy for I am holy"—hence, all are called by God to be saints. We must spend our eternity either in heaven or in hell—there is no alternative. Now the Saints were generally characterised by the virtue which was opposed to their besetting sin. Thus, St. Francis of Sales was naturally very passionate, yet he became the meekest of men. Blessed Margaret Mary, who was inordinately fond of ease and comfort, became remarkable for her love of mortifi-

cation. Many other examples might be cited. Hence we see that it is necessary to know our besetting sin in order to find out which virtue we must particularly strive to acquire.

Now ask yourself, reader, "Do I know it, do I recognise it in all its branches?" If not, the evident conclusion is, "I must find it out."

You are in retreat, and this is a good proof that you are in earnest about saving your soul ; so if you do know your capital enemy, study his strategy more deeply in the light of past experience, that you may learn to detect his pitfalls more readily. If you have never recognised this inveterate foe, then face him during these days of retreat, study his tactics, do not fear to confront the enemy.

If your retreat is to be a serious preparation for death or for the warfare of life, you must be in earnest. So often you have knelt at the altar and told our loving Saviour little details about your sins which humbled you, little acts of meanness which you would

shrink from telling to your most intimate friend. So now be brave, think over the matter prayerfully in the presence of Jesus, humbly begging Him to enlighten you.

Having considered the advantages and the necessity of knowing your besetting sin and asked God to help you, ask yourself the following questions :—

1. What is the most frequent subject of my thoughts and conversation ?
2. What do I fear most ?
3. What do I love most ?
4. What sins do I commit most frequently, and why ?
5. What sins was I constantly reprov'd for when a child ?
6. What acts of virtue do I find most difficult to perform ?

Now suppose the answer to these questions to be respectively—

1. *I generally think of*

Fashions, dress, pleasures, my personal appearance ; what effect I am producing or can produce on others

2. *I fear most*

That anyone should outshine me in good looks or fashionable appearance.

3. *I love most*

To be admired and flattered, to excel others, to lead in society.

4. *My commonest sins are*

Boasting, vanity, waste of time over my toilet, lowering my rivals in the esteem of others, extravagance, self-indulgence.

5. *I was scolded for*

Despising those less well dressed, showing off, love of dress, dislike of the poor and afflicted, jealousy when others had more elegant clothes than I was allowed to wear.

6. *It costs me a good deal*

To wear something that is not quite fashionable, to economise in the matter of dress, to support a rival in the matter of dress, to carry a parcel in the street, to admit that my means are moderate, etc.

You see clearly what fault is here revealed : vanity in its most acute form. In like manner, whenever these questions are frankly answered, the foe is generally discovered. If you are in doubt after having answered these questions, then ask a true friend for help, or consult a confessor who knows you well.

As “a straw shews which way the wind blows,” so trifling circumstances point out the besetting sin. Thus, *a sudden feeling* of joy or sorrow is often caused according as the besetting sin is indulged or thwarted. A vain girl will be in high spirits for the day after receiving some delicate compliment ; she will have “a fit of the blues” if she has been ignored or snubbed.

Let us suppose that you have found out the capital enemy ; you know your besetting sin and how it shows itself, then the next step is to fight against it : (1) supernaturally, (2) resolutely, (3) constantly.

1. *Supernaturally.* We must fight it because it offends God, and not merely because it humbles us. In this life-long warfare we

must rely on God's help, and be convinced that of ourselves we can never conquer it, hence we must pray for grace to defeat our enemy.

2. *Resolutely.* Each time we go to confession we have to be resolved carefully to avoid the occasions of sin. There is no greater occasion of sin for us than our predominant passion, so we must be fully determined to wage an incessant warfare against this enemy. It will not do merely to tone down the exterior marks, the evil must be uprooted. If you are in earnest you will take some practical measures, and one excellent means is to make it the subject of a particular examination which is explained in another chapter.

3. *Constantly.* St. Francis of Sales tells us that our foe will *outlive* us, which, of course, means that we shall always have to be on our guard. At first we shall have regular pitched battles, then when we have defeated our enemy in the open field, he will take up guerilla warfare and try to surprise us. So we must realise that our

foes are implacable—with whom we can make neither truce nor treaty.

One word in conclusion, never lose courage. Discouragement is one of the devil's pitfalls for ensnaring earnest souls, and multitudes have been caught in them. With true humility let us have courage and confidence, come what may. God is with us, Mary our Mother intercedes for us, and by our side we have our Guardian Angel who will help us in the combat. "There are more for, than against us," so let us march bravely onward and heavenward, looking to Jesus our Saviour for strength in time of need.

2.—OUTLINES OF TYPICAL CHARACTERS.

I.—*The Independent Character.* Motto, "All for liberty." Contented with self, indifferent to blame, professed indifference to praise, comparing ourselves with others, always drawing conclusions to our own advantage. Saying things to shock our companions, boasting of evil deeds, never asking or taking advice, despising our

neighbour, having a habit of ridiculing others, of laying down the law, of tyrannising over inferiors, of running into the occasions of sin to show our independence, angry when thwarted in our schemes, proud of our talents, wealth, position, never giving up our rights and taking even more; unwilling to make ourselves known to a confessor, too proud to give an explanation when unjustly accused, throwing up home and friends when our pride is wounded, ruining our worldly prospects in life rather than put up with a slight. Too proud to acknowledge ourselves in the wrong or to repair a fault; insolent to superiors.

Such a character, on the other hand, may have the good qualities of integrity, industry, generosity, and punctuality in the performance of duties.

II.—*The Pharisaical Character*.—Motto, “Look at me.” Extremely contented with self, esteeming ourselves superior to all, wrapped up in self, angry if a member of our family disgraces himself because of the discredit it reflects on us, rather than grieved

at the sin against God. Having no mercy for those who fall, being very hard towards our inferiors, exacting our rights rigorously, refusing to forgive and forget, doing good works to acquire esteem, habitually striving *discreetly* to attract attention in all we do or say, having an under-current of self-consciousness : “What effect am I producing?” Suspicious and distrustful of our neighbours; making an idol of our reputation and respectability. Sulking when reproved, if found out in a positive fault, feeling more annoyed at being discovered than sorry for having offended God. Always ready with an excuse, even before accused; speaking against ourselves in order to be contradicted, meditating for hours and days on any praise received, vowing vengeance interiorly on a person who has blamed us; never overlooking a slight.

The good qualities would probably be—fidelity in the performance of duty, frugality and steadfastness.

III.—*The Vain Character*. Motto, “All for show.” Proud of our personal appearance,

family, talents; always calling attention to them; intense longing to be “the observed of all observers;” dress, good looks, the fashions, the opposite sex and intrigues, form the staple of our conversation. Wasting time at our toilet, “making up” to improve our personal appearance (this deceives no one). Always longing for more than we have; keeping up appearances and thus exceeding our income; depriving those who depend on us of the necessities of life in order to satisfy our vanity; estimating our friends according to their income, objecting to have a friend who might outshine us; being angry if we are ugly, loving flattery, jealous of our rivals, trying to lower them in the esteem of the world; intense desire to make ourselves interesting, getting up strange stories with little or no foundation, even shamming sickness from the same motive. Trying to get luxuries which are beyond the means of our parents or husband. Inordinate love of pleasure, neglect of children, or home duties, refusing to wear any but the latest fashion, being more occupied in

church with our neighbour's dress or our own, than we are with our prayers ; trifling with affections of friends ; flirtations.

Such a person may be affectionate, truthful and generous.

IV.—*The Inconstant and Frivolous Character.* Motto : “Anything for a change.” Living in a perpetual state of agitation ; always beginning something fresh, rarely finishing what we undertake ; disorderly, pious and worldly in turn ; treating serious and religious topics flippantly ; always changing friends, no consideration for their feelings ; constantly acting imprudently ; continually changing our occupation and dwelling ; imprudently exposing ourselves to the occasions of sin, judging from appearances, excessively fond of novels, having no taste for serious conversation, not averse to “shewing off,” lacking real affection or piety, laughing at those who are pious, making superficial confessions, trying to pose as an authority or leader in society.

Such a character may be good-humoured,

truthful, generous, devoted *for a time* to any pursuit that satisfies its natural activity.

V.—*The Obstinate Character.* Motto: “Never yield.” Sticking to our own ideas, even when we know we are in the wrong; sulking for days and hours together when reproved or annoyed, refusing to say what has vexed us; showing our anger by silence or snappishness; doing the opposite of what we are told, hating all authority, obeying unwillingly, neglecting duties when in a temper, always fault-finding, never willing to yield or change our plans, selfishly pursuing our end; disrespectful to superiors, criticising their orders, never owning our faults or blunders, determining more firmly to have our own way just because a friend tries to dissuade us.

The good qualities may here be affection, constancy, truthfulness, integrity, and patience.

VI.—*The Deceitful Character.* Motto, “Still waters run deep.” Untruthful, sly, making mischief by tale-bearing, deceiving our superiors, fond of having secrets,

keeping up dangerous friendships, acting from base motives, sometimes using piety as a mask, throwing off all disguise when once found out; speaking diffidently of ourselves in order to be thought humble; ungrateful for benefits, repaying them by injuries, seeking our own advantage in all we do; striving to get the confidence of a person and then betraying it, never revealing our true motives—wearing a mask, so to say, all our lives.

Such a character may be patient, diligent, amiable, and to a certain extent affectionate.

VII. — *Undecided Character.* Motto, “Perhaps.” Always hesitating, want of energy in acting, seemingly incapable of taking a definite step; led by others; deferring duties, thinking too much of what people will think or say; afraid to undertake some good work for fear of opposition; wasting time in useless dreaming.

The good qualities may be generosity, affection, good nature, patience and truthfulness.

VIII.—*Weak Character.* Motto, “Anything for peace.” Not daring to stand up for God, or to differ from those to whom we are speaking ; committing sins when asked, not because we wish to, but because we lack the courage to say “No.” Afraid to stop sinful conversations, even when they displease us, seeking our ease and comfort ; being lazy about getting up, negligent in keeping our resolutions, unable to make little acts of mortification, cowardly in bearing pain or trials, grumbling at the least inconvenience, lacking courage to reprove or correct those under us, discouraged when reproved.

The good qualities may be diligence, affection, honesty and piety.

IX.—*Selfish, Jealous Character.* Motto, “All for me.” Having a desire to concentrate affection on ourselves, a longing for exterior marks of affection, being embraced, caressed, etc., desiring to have the first place in the affection of a friend ; being jealous and passionate when put on one side, taking offence when none was in-

tended ; sulking for days and weeks and refusing to give the reason, taking our petty vengeance, neglecting spiritual exercises and home duties as long as the sulky fit lasts ; sinning against charity in thought, word and deed, constantly thinking and talking of self, imagining no one has such great trials as we have ; giving way to rash judgments, touchiness, selfishness, taking little interest in the joys and sorrows of others, feeling very aggrieved when we are contradicted.

Here we may find the good qualities of affection, patience, truthfulness, industry, and endurance.

X.—*Indolent Character.* Motto, “ All for comfort.” Giving way to laziness, late rising, lounging postures, wasting time in doing nothing or in frivolous occupations ; dawdling over our work, procrastination, idly indulging in day dreams ; passionately fond of novel reading, love of our comfort, fear of the least pain, always indulging the body at the expense of the soul ; incurring debts through extravagance, neglecting

prayer ; irritable and insolent when reproved or asked to work ; untidy, indifferent to other's troubles, neglect of home duties, leaving children to servants, no thought for the troubles of others, no care for the poor.

Good qualities are rare in such a character, but we may find affection, truthfulness, and generosity to a certain extent.

XI.—*Irritable Character.* Motto, “ Let me alone.” Being angry at the least word, at a jest or refusal, imagining people are speaking *at* us ; interpreting actions unfavourably, being disagreeable and disobliging, not allowing our belongings to be touched, always contradicting, being very positive, blaming others for our blunders or faults, angry when kept waiting for a moment, exacting with equals and inferiors, impertinent to superiors, making no allowance for circumstances, *e.g.*, being hard on a man who cannot do his work on account of sickness ; angry if interrupted, always requiring to be waited on, jumping to conclusions often false, never admitting that we were to blame.

Such a person may be affectionate, pious, industrious, straightforward, honest, and zealous.

XII.—*Contradictory Character.* Motto, “No.” Quarrelling over straws, always “on the left,” *i.e.*, in opposition to our friends, fond of finding fault, of teasing, amusing ourselves at the expense of others, and so wounding charity ; having a mania for criticising orders and blaming measures taken, deliberately doing the contrary to what we are advised ; having a habit of disputing every statement or correcting each minor detail ; having no devotedness, little affection, being selfish.

These defects are compatible with industry, affection, temperance and piety.

XIII.—*Sentimental Character.* Motto, “Poetry and day dreams.” Living in an imaginary world with the heroes supplied by novels, being now melancholy, now giddy and excited ; wasting time in idle dreams and composing tales, indulging in novels to excess ; dislike of work, and above all of menial employments, preferring

what is agreeable to what is useful, thinking ourselves misunderstood ; making mountains of molehills ; longing to hear secrets ; fond of inventing harrowing tales which centre in self ; telling lies to make ourselves interesting, weaving them into long stories and continuing to “pile on the agony” if we can find a sympathetic listener ; brooding over imaginary troubles ; pretending to be ill, refusing to take food, even making ourselves ill to be taken notice of ; having a false idea of religion, making it consist in sentiments rather than in acts ; wasting time in writing sentimental love letters ; always thinking about ourselves and our health ; exciting dangerous passions by wilfully indulging in enervating pleasures, which make us lose our self-control, such as music, dancing, day dreams ; excusing our faults, afraid of facing a difficulty, extravagant and selfish.

Such a person may be affectionate, generous, pious, and diligent to a certain extent.

After having read these types of different

characters, perhaps, reader, you will say, I do not exactly recognise my portrait in any one of them. But in several I find traits which I notice in myself. In this case you can take your own portrait by putting together just those points which touch you personally.

3.—ON MAKING RESOLUTIONS.

It is well to follow some definite method such as the following when making resolutions :—

1. Pray for grace.
2. Read your retreat notes.
3. Think of the end you propose.
4. Note the obstacles to virtue.
5. Note the occasions of sin.
6. Examine the means that will help you.
7. Make your resolution.
8. Write down the motives of your choice.
9. Be generous with God.
10. Consult your director.
11. Pray for fidelity.
12. Be prepared for falls.
13. Choose a watchword.

A few words on each step will perhaps help you.

1. Pray earnestly that God may enlighten you. Without His help we are exposed to deceive ourselves or to be misled by the devil.
2. Read up the notes taken during the retreat, since the thoughts which struck you most were doubtless those which concerned your individual needs.
3. Think of the great end you desire to attain ; *e.g.*, I must save my soul. I wish to do good in the world. I must train aright those who depend on me.
4. Note in detail the obstacles that have hitherto stopped you. Is it your besetting sin? An attachment to some creature? The fear of making an effort? Love of the world, etc.?
5. Notice *how* and *when* your predominant passion leads you into sin. Observe particularly those faults which disedify or pain others. These must be attacked, since they injure

both you and your neighbour, and perhaps bring religion into discredit.

6. See what means you must take in order to keep from sin. Thus, you sin against charity whenever you are with a certain person ; or you are vain when elegantly dressed. Evidently to prevent these sins recurring you must give up this friendship, dress more quietly, etc.
7. Now take your resolution in the light of these observations. God, your neighbour and yourself should benefit by your retreat ; therefore you may have to take three resolutions. Let them be practical, suited to your needs, and not too comprehensive. Such a resolution as this, "I will always be humble," will just please the devil ; he may even suggest it, knowing that it will remain sterile. Frame your resolution thus rather : "I will accept a reproof without excusing myself ;" "I will watch over my tongue, and speak of things

rather than of persons." These are examples of clear practical resolutions.

8. Write down the two or three resolutions which you feel inspired to take, and then consult your confessor as to your choice. Note also the reasons *why* you take these resolutions. Your choice must be motivated.
9. Beware of being ashamed to change for the better. Those who know that you have made a retreat will expect to see you improve. They would be the first to taunt you with the contrary. Since the world will laugh at you in any case, you may as well be on the right side. We do not come into retreat to act the coward. Will you give God holocausts free-cost when He gave His Son for your salvation?
10. If you do not see clearly what resolutions to take, do not get flurried, pray earnestly, and then ask your director to decide the question, and

abide by his decision. Often a true friend can point out your weak side just as you can see your friends defects. Notice also of what faults your enemies accuse you : thus even your foes will render you service.

11. Having made your resolution, and obtained the advice of your director, pray for grace to be faithful. Ask our Blessed Mother to keep you from falling by her powerful intercession, and count on the strength which God gives to those who trust in Him. If you lean on yourself you will fall ; if you trust in God, you are safe for time and eternity.
12. You must be prepared for falls. In spite of your good will, and of all the graces you have received, there will be moments when your courage will fail. The devil will surprise you more than once, but you know now what to do after a fall, so add one more resolution as a *post-scriptum*, "I will re-take my reso-

lutions when I am so unfortunate as to break them."

13. Choose a watchword, and let it be in harmony with your resolutions. Here are a few :—

"Heaven is the prize," "Onward, Christian soldiers," "Now or never," "All for Thee, my Jesus," "Nearer my God to Thee," "My God, I love Thee," "Here am I, Lord," "Lo, I come to do Thy will," "Behold the handmaid of the Lord," "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" "Who is like to God?" "How long do you halt between two sides?" "What will this profit for eternity?" You can choose one of these or any other you may prefer. It is certainly a help to have some familiar word that decides us to do and dare for God.

4.—SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

Some people are frequently worried as to whether or not they are making spiritual

progress. It is not wrong to wish to know if we are improving, provided that our progress does not make us vain. Here are a few signs by which we may judge.

Perhaps, as you read what follows, you may exclaim: "I certainly have not all these signs of spiritual progress." It is not strange that you have not *all* these marks; should you find some you may be very thankful. If you are in earnest, as you make your retreat year by year you will find more, for those who really try to do better cannot fail to improve, and it is an encouragement to see that our efforts are not fruitless. Perhaps, reader, you are scrupulous, if so, you would do well to pass over this chapter; it is not written for you. For the scrupulous, the one great sign of spiritual progress is the greater perfection with which they practise obedience.

1. Have I less attachment for mortal sin, and am I willing to endure anything rather than offend God grievously?
2. Have I less attachment for venial sin,

so that I instinctively shrink from committing one deliberately?

3. Do I seek to diminish my sins of frailty and to be more watchful over myself?
4. Do I detect a temptation more readily?
5. Do I rise above sad, melancholy and discouraging thoughts? Am I habitually more cheerful?
6. Do I try more earnestly to keep back angry words and to watch over my tongue? Do I excuse myself less?
7. Am I more earnestly determined to fight my besetting sin courageously and perseveringly?
8. Am I more patient and indulgent with my neighbour's failings (with children and servants)? Am I improving as regards charity?
9. Do I strive to persevere in prayer, in spite of aridity and to give God His time?
10. Am I more regular and earnest in

frequenting the Sacraments and less guided by feelings or caprice in this matter?

11. Do I act with greater purity of intention, thinking less about the opinion of the world and doing my duty in spite of ridicule?
12. Do I bear crosses more patiently, refraining from murmuring and despondency?
13. Do I rise more *promptly* and *calmly* after a fault? Am I learning to know myself better and to be less surprised when I yield to temptation?
14. Am I more devoted and punctual in the works I have undertaken for God instead of performing them merely when "quite convenient"?
15. Am I faithful to some little practices of mortification?
16. Have I a less good opinion of myself and am I willing, *if not glad*, to be told of my faults?
17. Do I think less of wealth, fashion, position, affection of others? Does

· it cost me less to give them up now than it did formerly?

18. Do I sometimes think of God during the day, and is this practice becoming easier?
19. Have I more confidence in the infinite love of our merciful Saviour? Do I habitually in all confidence take my joys and sorrows to the Master's Feet?
20. When no evil consequences are likely to result, have I sometimes the courage to suffer some pain or contrariety with only God for witness?
21. Am I more docile to the inspirations of God, more prompt in executing them?
22. Can I more easily make acts of virtue for which no one gives me credit? (Example : If you make an apology which is ill received, are you less inclined to be discouraged and to regret having made it?)
23. Am I able to accept a humiliation more calmly, to let go any "bone

of contention " and to forgive and forget?

5.—PROGRESSIVE STEPS IN VIRTUE.

There is a danger that often threatens those who are in earnest about conquering their besetting sin. They are apt to attempt too much at a time. Now the correction of our predominant passion is not a matter of which we can make short work. To uproot it we must "divide and conquer," so these few hints may serve to guide those who are in doubt as to *how* to attack their besetting sin most effectually. The general principle is that we should begin by those faults which disedify; thence, we pass to those that are interior, observing due gradation, and not starting with the most difficult. These are "common sense" maxims, but why not employ this rare virtue in our spiritual life? There would be more saints in the world if people used it oftener. Those who are in doubt as to how to frame their resolutions, may derive some assistance

from the progressive steps in virtue which are subjoined.

I.—*Resolutions against sins arising from pride*, “whence all perdition took its ruin.”

- a. To avoid speaking of myself and trying to attract attention.
- b. To obey my superiors and to give in, even to my inferiors, when it is prudent to do so.
- c. To bear reproof without being *impertinent, angry, discouraged* or *sulky*.
- d. To accept advice when given, and to ask it and follow it when necessary.
- e. To put myself last, and to be contented that others should be preferred to me.
- f. To acknowledge my faults and shortcomings frankly and humbly, not only interiorly, but exteriorly.

II.—*Resolutions against covetousness*. “The desire of money is the root of all evil.”

- a. I will not be hard, unjust, and exacting with my neighbours.
- b. I will not refuse myself, through stinginess, the necessities of life.

- c. I will pay my debts without delay.
- d. I will never refuse to help in a work of charity or to give alms when it is in my power.
- e. I will cease to love money for its own sake, to delight in hoarding it, to be always fearful about losing it. To effect this I will devote at least the (specify the part) of my income to God.

III.—*Resolutions against lust.* St. Paul says, “Let it be not so much as named among you.”

- a. I will watch over my *eyes, ears* and *tongue*, lest I sin against holy purity.
- b. I will avoid bad company.
- c. I will be modest and reserved in my deportment, at all times refusing to give or receive lavish marks of affection.
- d. I will dress modestly and avoid flirting and trifling with the affections of others.
- e. I will detach my heart from the love of creatures, and strive to turn my affec-

tions to God. (One good means is to devote our time to the sick and poor, especially those whose infirmities are repulsive, whom we should have less inclination to assist.)

IV.—*Resolutions against anger.* “Let all bitterness and anger be put away from you.”

- a.* I will keep silence when angry.
- b.* I will endeavour not to show by my countenance when I am angry.
- c.* I will control myself and avoid violent actions or gestures.

N.B.—To keep these three resolutions it is often prudent to go away from the cause of temptation until we are calmer. This, of course, is not always possible.

- d.* I will never revenge myself by word or deed.
- e.* I will not be obstinate when thwarted.
- f.* I will be patient and forbearing, and offer to do just the things that try my patience and which I most dislike.

V.—*Resolutions against gluttony.* “Whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God.”

- a. I will avoid greediness and eat only at meal times.
- b. I will not complain about my food, nor give way to daintiness.
- c. If tempted to exceed in food, I will limit the quantity ; if my temptation is drunkenness, I will abstain altogether from alcoholic beverages.
- d. I will force myself to eat what is necessary even when appetite is lacking, and will take prescribed remedies punctually.
- e. I will keep the laws of fasting and abstinence when possible.
- f. I will not think with pleasure of taking food except when hungry, and will deprive myself at each meal of something I like, or eat something I dislike.
- g. When taking food I will endeavour to keep my thoughts on some other object.

VI.—*Resolutions against envy.* “Envy not the man who prospereth in his way.”

- a.* I will not show displeasure when others are preferred to me.
- b.* I will not speak against those of whom I am envious, nor strive to injure them deceitfully.
- c.* I will put myself out to render service to those of whom I am envious or jealous.
- d.* I will endeavour to turn my thoughts away from myself and from what I consider to be due to me. In preference, I will think of the needs of others and how I can alleviate them.
- e.* I will endeavour to keep in the background, and to put forward those of whom I am jealous.

VII.—*Resolution against sloth.* “Idleness hath taught much evil.”

- a.* I will perform my daily duties *promptly* and *punctually*, and begin the day by rising at the appointed hour.

- b.* I will avoid idle, lounging postures, disorder and wasting time.
- c.* I will not spend precious time in futile occupations, especially (specify).
- d.* I will make a point of finishing what I undertake.
- e.* I will devote () hours to work daily, and only allow myself () hour for recreation.
- f.* I will be diligent in performing my spiritual duties, and will never neglect them through sloth.

VIII.—*Resolutions against human respect.*

“Fear ye not the reproach of men.”

- a.* I will never neglect a duty through human respect.
- b.* I will have the courage to stand up for my convictions, and will not be so weak as to always assent to the opinion of the person with whom I am speaking, especially in the matter of faith or duty.
- c.* I will rebuke inferiors when necessary.
- d.* I will never join in sinful actions or indulge in sinful conversations through human respect.

- e.* I will be true to my colours and openly lead a Christian life, undeterred by fear of blame or ridicule.

IX. — *Resolutions against uncharitableness.* “Charity thinketh no evil.”

1. *In thought.* “Judge not that you may not be judged.”

- a.* I will avoid judging others uncharitably, and interpret their actions kindly.

- b.* I will avoid regarding and criticising the conduct of my neighbours.

2. *In word.* “If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.”

- a.* I will never speak untruthfully of others.

- b.* I will never speak uncharitably of my neighbour, especially of ().

- c.* I will speak kindly of my neighbours, especially of those for whom I have less sympathy or affection.

3. *In deed.* “Let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

- a.* I will never neglect a duty on account of aversion or hatred to anyone.

- b.* I will not refuse to speak to those who

have annoyed me nor take any revenge for an injury.

c. I will always forgive injuries and *keep silence* about them.

d. I will do good and pray for those who have injured me.

X.—*Resolutions against untruthfulness.*

“Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.”

a. I will always speak the truth, even though it condemns me.

b. I will never act a lie, or deceive my neighbours.

c. I will not incite others to tell a lie or to act deceitfully.

XI.—*Resolutions against Vanity.*

a. I will avoid seeking to attract attention by making up, personal adornments, elegance of toilet, affectation, and coquettish tricks.

b. I will dress simply and avoid immediately adopting the latest novelties in fashions.

c. I will allow myself a reasonable fixed sum for dress, and never exceed it.

- d.* I will avoid making dress the subject of my conversation and thoughts, *and wasting time at my toilet.*
- e.* I will wear something less becoming in order to conquer my vanity.
- f.* I will curtail superfluous expense in the matter of dress in favour of the poor.

XII.—*Resolutions against Worldliness.*

“Love not the world.”

- a.* I will faithfully perform all my religious duties.
- b.* I will avoid ostentation, extravagance and debts.
- c.* I will never put pleasure before duty.
- d.* I will perform *certain* home duties instead of paying others to do them for me (specify).
- e.* I will not give more than () hours daily to pleasure, and will always avoid dangerous amusements.
- f.* I will live below my income, that I may perform works of charity (specify).

CHAPTER IV.

I. ON CONFESSION.

PENANCE is the Sacrament which the majority of Catholics receive oftener than any other, and as those actions which we are in the habit of performing frequently, cease to impress us, there is a danger that this sacrament may be frequented by a kind of routine which renders it less fruitful. How is this to be avoided ?

The best way is to make our preparation seriously in order to vivify our faith. If, when we approach the tribunal of penance we realise something of its sacredness there will be less danger of our confessing in a perfunctory spirit. Doubtless, reader, you have been instructed in your catechism ; as a child you learned that there were four chief points to observe when preparing for confession ; and yet, as you look back, you will probably find that many a time you

have omitted one or the other, either from negligence or forgetfulness. For instance, how often, when preparing for confession, you have begun with this question, "What sins have I to confess?" you have passed over the first point altogether, and perhaps the fourth comes off as badly. As you read this you say to yourself, "What is the fourth point?" This shows how necessary it is not to forget the simple truths taught us in childhood, and how we should occasionally look them up if we would keep them in mind.

During retreat we refresh our memories and this instruction may be useful both to those who have forgotten how to prepare themselves for confession and to converts who perchance have never been well instructed in the matter.

All catechisms of Christian doctrine give the following method of preparation for confession, and manuals of devotion follow the same order.

1. The *earnest* prayer for grace to make a good confession.

2. The *careful* examination of conscience.
3. The *sincere* act of contrition.
4. The *firm* purpose of amendment.

Let us briefly consider each of these steps.

I.—*We must earnestly pray for grace to make a good confession.* Without the grace of God we can do nothing towards our salvation, and prayer is the appointed means of obtaining grace. Hence, we must beg God to enlighten us as to our faults and shortcomings. We need humility to look our faults in the face and to be perfectly frank, for the devil and our own pride occasionally make restitution and give back to those who are preparing for confession, the shame of which they robbed them when they committed the sin.

Just as when a ray of sunlight penetrates into a dark room it renders visible the thousands of particles that are floating in the air, so when the divine rays of the Sun of Righteousness penetrate into the inmost depths of the folds of conscience, the sinner sees his faults in their true light. The first

condition towards obtaining this supernatural illumination is to feel our need of it, the second is to pray earnestly for it, when we are preparing for confession. The best place to make your preparation is in church in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Begin by reflecting for a moment that you are in the presence of God, make an act of adoration and humbly beg the aid of the Divine assistance. Use your own words if possible ; set prayers, however, may be useful when we are distracted or in spiritual desolation. Take three or four minutes at least for this step.

II.—*The careful examination of conscience.* Here it may be well to use a book or a set of questions which you could draw up for yourself in retreat containing a list of those sins into which you fall most frequently. It is good to note the root of our sins ; this helps us to know ourselves, and often it is a good exercise of humility to confess the motive which led us into sin, for it is frequently a greater humiliation to confess a sinful motive, or some trifling detail, than

it is to accuse ourselves of the actual sin. To avoid needless anxiety, remember the rules laid down about confession.

1. We are only *obliged* to confess our mortal sins and those which we think may be mortal.
2. We are not *bound* to confess our venial sins, but it is well to do so if we are in earnest about saving our soul.
3. *Forgotten* sins are forgiven with those for which we are contrite.

Make sure of what you have to say before you enter the confessional, and arrange your sins in order. The usual plan is to accuse yourself (1) of sins against God, (2) those against your neighbour, (3) those against yourself. This last division includes all those sins which you could commit if you lived a hermit's life; such sins as laziness, greediness, pride, etc. The examination of conscience for an ordinary confession should take about five minutes.

III.—*The sincere act of contrition.* Here, confess to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, the faults you have discovered. Endeavour to

excite yourself to contrition by a brief meditation on the goodness of God, the sufferings of Christ, or the punishment of sin. This third step is the most important part of our preparation, for contrition can take the place of the confession when the latter cannot be made. Take two or three minutes for this point.

IV.—*The firm purpose of amendment.* This includes a glance at the past, in order to note the occasions and the causes which led us into sin. We then take some definite resolution to avoid the sin to which we are most frequently tempted. We foresee the *occasions* and note what *means* we must take if we would keep from sin. This is the *firm* purpose of amendment; a weak one is worthless. We can only amend, in so far as we depend on the grace of God and not primarily on our efforts. So ask for grace to be faithful to your resolutions.

Having seriously taken these four steps, we are now ready for confession. Be careful not to lose your contrition if kept waiting at the confessional. Take this as a little

exercise of patience, and if you foresee that you may have to wait half an hour or more, it is perhaps better for you to make a spiritual reading, or say your rosary, taking the sorrowful mysteries, as a prayer for contrition. Many would find this preferable to dwelling on their sins for a long time.

The whole preparation for an ordinary confession should take about a quarter of an hour. When in retreat, it is usual to make a review of our life since our last retreat, or at least to accuse ourselves of the principal faults. This, however, should only be done by the advice of our confessor. What is good for one person may be very harmful for another.

2. EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR THOSE WHO CONFESS FREQUENTLY.

In Relation to God.

Neglect of morning and evening prayers; careless or wilful distractions; neglect of examination of conscience; waste of time, especially on Sundays and holy-days; little

attention, devotion and punctuality at Mass ; irreverence and negligence in preparing for the Sacraments, in our spiritual reading or meditation ; careless about children and servants as regards giving or procuring them religious instruction if necessary ; allowing them in sufficient time for prayer and for frequenting the Sacraments ; permitting them to read books against the Faith ; irreverence in speaking of God and holy things ; neglect of duty ; omission of duty through human respect, interest, or any other wrong motive ; no zeal for God's honour, for justice, virtue and truth ; want of resignation of the will to God in sorrows, poverty and illness ; wilful doubts against faith ; disobedience to the laws of the Church.

In Relation to our Neighbour.

Disobedience ; murmuring ; contemptuous words ; sadness, peevishness, and impatience when told of our faults ; scorning good advice ; criticising superiors ; giving offence by injurious words or actions ; sins of calumny, detraction, lies and tale-bear-

ing ; causing discord and quarrels by mischievous interference ; vexing others by peevishness and impertinence in demeanour, speech or conversation ; taking pleasure in vexing or mortifying others ; provoking them to swear, curse, or in any way to offend God ; mocking or reproaching our neighbours for their corporal or spiritual imperfections ; judging our neighbours rashly ; excessive rigour in reprehending children, servants or inferiors, or weakness in not giving just reproof when necessary ; impatience with their oversights and imperfections ; not giving them advice when necessary ; no solicitude for their spiritual and corporal wants ; giving disedification by bad example ; no special watchfulness over conversation when children are present ; want of punctuality and diligence in acquitting ourselves of our employments ; contracting debts through extravagance or delaying to pay just debts.

In Relation to Ourselves.

Obstinate in following our own will ;

tenacious of our own opinion in dangerous or scandalous matters ; quarrelling over trifles ; taking undue pleasure in hearing ourselves praised ; yielding to vanity in thought, word or deed ; boasting and ostentation ; overmuch ease, sleep and luxuries ; jealousy and envy ; proud and overbearing in conversation ; spending too much time in amusements or in frivolous and useless employments. Omitting devotions or putting them off to unseasonable times ; giving way to sadness or sulkiness ; sins against purity.

Those who desire a fuller examination of conscience will find it in an ordinary prayer-book. The second chapter of this manual will suggest other points of self-examination.

3.—REFLECTIONS AND AFFECTIONS BEFORE CONFESSION AFTER SELF EXAMINATION.

The affections are intended only as a help, not so much to furnish words as matter for thought. Your own words,

reader, when speaking to God, are far preferable to any which another can suggest. We need to learn to speak to God in all simplicity. In heaven there will be no books, so let us begin on earth our apprenticeship for eternity. Use these thoughts only in as much as they are a help; make frequent pauses, and let the thoughts sink deeply into your mind. Accustom yourself to short pauses, for the silence of adoration and self-abasement.

This exercise will help you to understand the “confiteor” better, and to say it more devoutly. It is a good plan to meditate on those prayers, which we recite frequently, in order to avoid routine. St. Ignatius recommends this practice in his Spiritual Exercises; he calls it “The Second Manner of Praying.”

“*Bless me, heavenly Father, for I have sinned.*” Behold Thy sinful child prostrate before Thee—I have erred from the path of duty, I have strayed from the fold; now I come back to Thee, my loving Father. Thou art more rejoiced to see me return, to

have me near Thee, than I am to come to Thee. In shame and confusion I kneel at Thy Feet—"Father, I am not worthy to be called Thy child." How good Thou art to suffer me in Thy presence, to let me kneel here in silence and adore Thee, while my miseries mutely appeal to Thy Infinite Mercy.

I confess to God the Father Almighty. To Thee Who didst conceive from all eternity the design to create me ; Who didst love me with an everlasting love ; Who hast watched over me every instant of my life, I confess to God, my heavenly Father, that I have sinned exceedingly.

I confess to God the Son, Who for us men, and for our salvation, "came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost." I kneel at the foot of Thy cross, dear Jesus ; I dare to clasp Thy Sacred Feet, though I dare not look up to Thee. I confess to God the Son Who hast said : "Come to me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you."*

* St. Matt. xi.

To the Good Shepherd Who didst promise :
“So will I visit my sheep, and will deliver them out of all the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.” “I will seek that which was lost ; and that which was driven away. I will bring again : and I will bind up that which was broken.”* I confess to Thee, Lord with all confidence, for Thou camest to seek and save “that which was lost.” Saviour, it is good for me to be here, and to confess that I have sinned exceedingly.

I confess to God the Holy Ghost, Who didst regenerate me in holy baptism ; Who with ineffable joy didst take possession of my soul and dwell there until I grieved Thee by my sins and forced Thee to quit ; to Thee I owe every good inspiration that I have ever received ; to Thee, the Holy Ghost, I confess that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed.

I confess to Blessed Mary, ever a Virgin, to my loving Mother to whose powerful in-

* Ezech, xxxiv.

tercession perchance I owe my return to God ; I confess to thee, my Mother. Thou art the Refuge of sinners, and if the angels rejoice over the penitent soul, how much more wilt thou, the “Queen of Angels,” rejoice ? Thou knowest, as no other creature can know, the value of an immortal soul ; thou didst stand by thy Son when He hung on the Cross for my sins ; thou art the Mother of Jesus, thou art also my Mother. I confess to thee, and I commit my cause into thy hands. Do thou plead with Jesus for me, and obtain for me the remission of my sins.

I confess to Blessed Michael the Archangel, who didst lead the heavenly host when Satan fell “like lightning” from heaven. I confess to thee, who didst lead forward thy victorious host with the cry “Who is like unto God !” Satan, thy implacable foe, hath conquered me. Do thou, blessed spirit, defeat him once more by thy powerful intercession on my behalf. I confess to thee, blessed Michael, guardian of the realms of purgatory, who knowest so well

how an all-just Judge punishes sin, obtain for me the grace of perfect contrition, that I may be cleansed from my stain of sin ere I go hence to be no more seen.

I confess to Blessed John the Baptist. To thee, the Precursor of my Saviour ; to thee who wast sanctified before thy birth. As thou didst point out the Lamb of God to those who came to thee confessing their sins, so do thou point Him out to me, and assist me by thy powerful intercession.

I confess to the Holy Apostles, Peter and Paul. To thee, St. Peter, who knowest what it is to be tempted, and to have yielded. Obtain for me, by thy powerful intercession, to repent of my sins as perfectly as thou didst repent of having denied thy Master. I confess to the holy Apostle, St. Paul, who regarded himself as the chief of sinners.

I confess to "all the Saints," "who have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb." All ye saints of God, obtain for me the grace of perfect contrition.

Kneeling in spirit at the foot of the

Cross, at the Feet of my loving Saviour, with Mary, His Mother, and all the saints and angels as witnesses, I forestall the day of judgment, and I confess that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed.

I have sinned in thought times without number ; I have given way to doubts against faith, distrust of God, wilful distractions in prayer ; I have sinned in thought by rash judgment, by angry and revengeful thoughts. Pride and vanity have filled my mind ; jealousy and envy have made me sad. Often I have welcomed and nourished evil thoughts by reading bad books. How little place hast Thou, my God, had in my thoughts ; they have all been centred in myself. I confess that I have sinned exceedingly in thought. In silence I humble myself before Thee. . . . Do Thou bring to my mind all those sins which I have forgotten. I confess to Thee the sins of thought which I have most often committed.

I have sinned exceedingly in word by

my sins of impiety, irreverence, profane words and lies ; by vain, idle conversation ; by inciting others to commit sin ; by indiscretion, boasting, murmuring, criticising, contesting, equivocating, exaggerating, ridiculing ; having the last word ; contending over straws ; censuring other's conduct ; flattering ; exciting others to rebellion ; detraction ; calumny ; answering snappishly. I confess to Thee, my God, those sins of the tongue to which I give way the oftenest. In silence I humble myself before Thee for all my sins of word. . . .

I have sinned exceedingly in deed. I have disobeyed Thy laws ; neglected my daily duties ; robbed Thee of Thy honour ; injured my neighbour by sins of revenge, anger, and scandal. I confess my sins of disobedience, pride, vanity, covetousness, impurity, and selfishness. Do Thou bring to my mind also my forgotten sins, that I may repent sincerely of them. I confess to Thee those special sins of which I am most ashamed ; those which cost me so much to

confess. Thou knowest each detail. In silence I confess them, and humble myself before Thee.

I confess that I have sinned exceedingly by my sins of omission. I have neglected to worship Thee ; to assist my neighbour ; to give alms ; to succour Thy poor ; to frequent the Sacraments ; to watch over those under my care ; to learn the truths of my religion. For days, months, even years, I have lived as if there were no God ; the world has been my idol ; I have lived for the creature ; I have placed creatures on Thy throne, my Lord and my God. I confess to Thee, loving Saviour, my chief sins of omission . . . I humble myself at Thy Feet. . . .

“ For these and all my other sins which I cannot call to mind, I am heartily sorry, and humbly beg pardon ” of Thee, my loving Father. Do Thou “ heal my soul for I have sinned against Thee.” Kneeling in spirit at Thy Feet, dear Lord, I humbly implore Thee by Thy Precious Blood, shed for me on the Cross, to absolve

me as Thou didst absolve Mary Magdalen. Place Thy pierced Hand on my head and absolve me from all my sins. By the ministry of Thy priest let me receive the full absolution that shall be as a second baptism. I am heartily sorry, because I love Thee—because I fear Thy justice. With the help of Thy grace I firmly purpose amendment. I cannot keep from sin of myself; do Thou assist me. Blessed Spirit of God, let me hear Thy gentle voice warning me when I am on the point of committing sin. I promise Thee, my God, specially to avoid (specify), and to make any sacrifice for which Thou mayest ask me. “What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Holy Mary, my Mother, blessed angels and saints, obtain for me the grace to be faithful to my resolution. Into Thy pierced Hands, Lord Jesus, I commend my soul for time and for eternity.

AMEN.

4.—RULES TO OBSERVE AFTER HAVING FALLEN INTO SIN.

I.—*We must not be astonished* at having fallen. Each defeat comes to some people as a surprise, yet, if we carefully consider the following points, we shall see that there is no reason for astonishment since :—

- a. Original sin which we inherited has left our soul weak.
- b. There is no sin of which we are not capable.
- c. Man's foes, the devil, the world and the flesh are numerous and powerful.
- d. It is so much easier to yield to temptation than to conquer.
- e. Different circumstances call out unforeseen inclinations for evil.
- f. If St. Paul did the things he would not, how can we expect always to resist?
- g. Falls sometimes come from running too fast (*i.e.*, attempting what is beyond our strength).

Hence, to be astonished at our faults proves that we lack self-knowledge and

overestimate our strength. Neither should we be surprised at the faults of others.

II.—*We must not confuse sorrow for sin, with wounded self-love.* “The sorrow for sin according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation.” It leads us to acknowledge, to regret and to repair our faults calmly ; such was the sorrow of St. Peter. “The sorrow of the world worketh death,” and this sorrow produces uneasiness, idleness, anger, jealousy, envy and impatience.

A calm and deep sorrow glorifies God, whereas irritable indignation against self, only leads us into fresh sins.

III.—*We must not be discouraged after a fault,* because, a soul that is discouraged is incapable of energetically resisting the devil. Hope is the golden chain let down from Heaven, and discouragement makes us let go our hold. Think how many sins you have committed when indulging “in fits of the blues.” Just as a dispirited army is sure of defeat, so the dispirited soldier of Christ is sure to fall into sin. Discourage-

ment is a snare laid for us by the arch-fiend, and multitudes of souls have been ruined eternally by it. God is always powerful to aid, so "forgetting the things that are past" we must press on. The great remedy for discouragement is to look at our Lord and seek our strength in Him.

IV.—*We must profit by the lessons our falls teach us*, and endeavour to be more fervent in order to repair the past, and thus we can outwit the devil and turn even our faults into means of spiritual progress.

CHAPTER V

I.—ON WEDDED LIFE.

IT is a rule for earnest Catholics to make a special retreat in preparation for marriage. They are indeed about to take a solemn step, and it is profitable to spend a few days in prayer and in considering the duties awaiting them. There would be far more happy Christian homes if all Catholics took this precaution before getting married. Therefore this short instruction on the sacrament of matrimony will be useful to those who intend to receive it, while it will be a reminder of their obligations to those who are already married.

The Church teaches that matrimony is a sacrament, a bond which can only be severed by the death of one of the contracting parties. It is not, for the Catholic, a mere natural or civil contract, but a holy union instituted by God Himself. Since matrimony is a sacra-

ment, it follows that it has the essential elements of a sacrament, that is to say, the outward sign, the inward grace and the institution by Jesus Christ. Moreover, matrimony entails certain obligations and presupposes certain dispositions for its worthy reception. Let us consider each of these points briefly.

The outward sign consists in the mutual giving up of the contracting parties to each other and their reciprocal dominion over each other. This constitutes the “matter” of the sacrament. The “form” consists of the words and signs by which the contract is effected. The contracting parties are themselves the ministers of the sacrament, but the Church strictly enjoins that a priest should be present to witness and bless the contract. Hence Catholics are forbidden under pain of mortal sin to contract a civil marriage. The Catechism of Christian Doctrine tells us that a marriage contracted in mortal sin or in disobedience to the laws of the Church is a sacrilege, and that “instead of a blessing the guilty parties

draw down on themselves the anger of God." Since the contracting parties are themselves the ministers of the Sacrament it follows that the marriage of baptised non-Catholics is really sacramental. We have need to be reminded of the teaching of the Church in these days, when the idea of marriage as a mere civil contract is fast gaining ground, and when the laws of so many nations sanction divorce, forgetful of our Saviour's precept, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Some theologians have thought it was when Christ said these words that He raised matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, others are of opinion that this took place at Cana of Galilee when Jesus was invited to a marriage feast, or that it may have been thus ennobled after his resurrection when He taught His apostles, "for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the Kingdom of God." *

Matrimony is a sacrament of the living, hence the Christian who would receive it

* Acts i.

worthily must be in a state of grace. To those who receive it with this essential disposition, this sacrament brings an increase of sanctifying grace together with those special actual graces which are needed to fulfil the duties it imposes. It is only in novels that people "get married and live happily ever after." In real life the reverse often happens. If married people have their joys, they also have their troubles and difficulties, and oftener the latter preponderate.

There are special difficulties attached to every state of life, and matrimony has often more than its full share of them through the misconduct of either husband, wife or children. Evil habits, cursing, irreligion drunkenness, are trials which result from sin and make many a Christian's life one long sorrow. Then there are the crosses that our Heavenly Father may send, such as ill-health, sickness, poverty, reverses of fortune, anxiety about the children's welfare and bereavements. Often incompatibility of temper makes mutual support very diffi-

cult to practise and eccentricities of character are a fruitful source of irritation. There is the friction of the daily anxieties of life, the care of providing for the children, of bearing with their defects and giving them a Christian education. Here the mother has the greatest practical share of the work. It must not be totally neglected, shirked or entrusted to servants. Parents require courage to correct their children; they must give them a good example and train them for God, not for themselves. They must be willing to give them back to Him when He sees fit to ask for this sacrifice. All this is indeed difficult, but not impossible; prayer will obtain for us the necessary strength. How hard it is sometimes for a wife to continue to love and respect her husband when his conduct disgraces the family! How difficult for a man to love and bear with a woman who is addicted to drink, or who ruins the peace of his home by her vanity, extravagance or indulgence! Doubtless all these trials do not fall to the same family, but it is wise to

look them in the face. Should they be our lot we shall be better prepared to bear them ; if they are not, we shall be all the more grateful that we have been spared.

The cares and responsibilities of parents are indeed a heavy load, but our Heavenly Father fits the burden for the back, and we know that "God is faithful—Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able : but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it."* This grace to bear the trials of married life is one of the effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony. We have a right and title to the actual graces as we need them, provided we have received the sacrament with the necessary dispositions. The Christian who is about to get married does well to look these difficulties in the face, and to ask, "Am I prepared to bear them should they fall to my lot?" True, the grace will be there "in time of need," and this is the great consolation for those who are now experiencing some of these

* 1 Cor. x.

difficulties. Trials must come, but they never come alone to the true Christian—they are accompanied by the strength to support them.

There are also the joys of married life, the love and affection of a true heart; the happiness of having a companion in all our sorrows. What can equal the joy of a mother as she gazes on her first-born! Who can express the intense happiness of a father when, for the first time, he hears his little one pronounce his name? How he watches the development of the child's faculties, and what pride he takes in the little paradise he calls "home." These are pure joys, and Christian parents must take care not to let these joys draw them from God. Many a woman, who before her marriage was a devout Catholic, allows her children to take the place of God in her heart. She lives now only for them, and thinks rarely of Him. All her thoughts are how to procure her children's welfare in this world, while she neglects their spiritual interests. It needs "a special grace" to

use the joys of married life without letting them lead us from God. But these graces will be given if only we pray. We have a right to them, for they are an intrinsic part of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

Let us now see what dispositions are required of those who enter the state of wedlock. Here are a few of the most important :—

1. We must pray earnestly that God may bless our choice and guide us aright.
2. We must be well instructed in our religion, and especially in the duties of married life.
3. Before marriage we must “reckon the charges” and consider well if we are able to undertake the obligations and fulfil the duties of that state of life.
4. We must have a pure intention, and enter this state because we believe it to be the Will of God for us. We must not get married merely to better our worldly prospects, to be independent, etc.

5. It is wise to let ourselves be guided by the advice of our parents, guardians, or director.
6. It is well to make a retreat before receiving this sacrament.
7. We should have a firm resolution to be forbearing, to keep peace as far as possible, and to be faithful to our obligations ; to live within our income and to make our companion in life happy.
8. We should be determined always to put God first, and not let the cares of married life lead us to neglect religious duties.

One word, in conclusion, about mixed marriages. We know that the Church rightly considers them dangerous both to the faith of the Catholic party, and because often the children of such marriages are lost to the Church. How is it that mixed marriages are so frequent? Ignorance seems to be the great cause. Catholics who are not well instructed see no danger in marrying a non-Catholic. They do not realise

what unhappiness and spiritual dangers arise from them. If the Church tolerates them she does so only under *special conditions*. A dispensation from the Bishop is required for a mixed marriage, and this is only accorded for *weighty motives*; such as the fear of driving a Catholic to contract a sinful marriage, the reasonable hope of the conversion of the non-Catholic party, or some good to religion in general or to the individual.

The special conditions are that the Catholic shall be allowed the free exercise of the Catholic faith, that all the children shall be baptised and brought up Catholics (not only those of the same sex as the Catholic parent). These conditions must be formally signed by the non-Catholic with the understanding that they are serious promises and not mere formalities. Lastly the Catholic party must endeavour to procure the conversion of the other by prayer and prudent efforts.

In spite of all these precautions, mixed marriages are a great source of leakage in

the Church, because the solemn promises made before marriage are so often broken. Hence Catholics should avoid mixed marriages and endeavour to prevent their children from contracting them. A Catholic home should be modelled on the home of the Holy Family at Nazareth, and how is this possible where the parents cannot worship God together? If it is true that some have been led into the Church through mixed marriages, it is also true that many more have been led away from the faith, and experience confirms this daily. Sometimes the non-Catholic is willing to enter the Church in order to marry a Catholic. In this case it is wiser, if possible, to defer the marriage in order that the convert may be well instructed and give proofs of a sincere conversion. Many who are hurriedly baptised just before their marriage fail to persevere.

2.—LABOURERS IN GOD'S VINEYARD.

We may safely conclude that Catholics who are in the habit of making a yearly

retreat are in earnest about saving their soul, and they rightly look on an annual retreat as a means to this end. Their primary object is their own sanctification and salvation. Now, in addition to this general intention, which is common to all retreatants, there are some who have a secondary object in view and who make a retreat as a preparation for marriage, or as a means of finding out if God wills them to enter the priesthood or religious life. Those whose path in life is already decided may also have in view to fit themselves better for the work they have undertaken in order to do more good in the world.

Are you a worker in God's vineyard, reader? Then it is well to meditate on the duties you have undertaken, to forecast the difficulties, to contemplate the promised reward that you may be encouraged to greater fervour in the Master's service. Have you hitherto been content to work in the vineyard of your own soul? Then it is surely time to see if you cannot do more, and undertake some special work for God.

You are now in the "desert place apart" with Jesus our Master. Listen to His gentle voice, "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard" and ask Him to show you what He wills you to do for Him. Let us consider for a few minutes, Who it is that deigns to call us, how and when He makes His voice heard and what He would have us do for Him? Then when we have decided what work we will undertake for God we shall do well to consider the dispositions our Lord requires and the rewards He promises.

It is the Master of the vineyard who calls us, it is our Heavenly Father. He has every right to our services and He wills that men should be instrumental in the sanctification and salvation of their fellows. Thus the Christian parents have to train their children for God. The angels of God guard these little ones, but they do not take the responsibility of training them from the parents. To each and all the voice of the Master comes: "Son, go work to-day in My vineyard." To all idlers is addressed

the reproof, "Why stand you here all day idle?"

Parents have a very special call from God; to them the command is given, "Take this child and nurse him for Me: I will give thee thy wages." How much depends on a Christian mother, may we not say that the salvation of her children is in her hands? The tree inclines as the twig is bent and "the child is father to the man."

Not only to parents does the call come, "Son go work to-day in My vineyard," but to every Catholic within certain limits. There are few who cannot undertake some good work for God. There is room for all, for in many parishes workers are sorely needed. Those who have no home ties should be foremost among the workers, if they would avoid a life of luxurious ease and indolence. Pious Catholics who feel no inclination for marriage and no call to religious life are often a great power for good in the world. They can undertake works of mercy which many religious houses find incompatible with the rule, and a secular can often visit places

where neither priest nor nun would be admitted.

It is a good thing, when in retreat, to ask ourselves, "Should I be missed if God called me hence?" If the answer is in the negative then clearly we are not helping on the Kingdom of God much. Too many have passed away of whom the words of Holy Scripture are but too true. "There are some of whom there is no memorial, who are perished as if they had never been." Let us pray that it may be otherwise for all who are making this retreat, rather may it be said of them when they shall have passed hence, "Blessed are they that saw thee and were honoured with thy friendship." All can do something for God if only they have the good will.

But how and when does the Master make His voice heard? If it be true that the command, "Work, for I am with you, saith the Lord" is given to all, how can we know what we are to undertake? The first means is to pray that God may reveal His will to us. "Speak Lord for thy servant

heareth," for "Whatsoever Thou shalt command I will do." The next means is to consider for what work we are most suited. We must see the bent of our inclinations. We must consider our age, state of health, station in life, means and capabilities. All these are important factors in determining what works of charity we take up. Then again providential circumstances call forth hidden resources and reveal a vocation for some special work. God makes use of all these means to reveal His Will and points out the particular corner of the vineyard where He would have us labour. Last, but not least, there is the voice of obedience. If you are in doubt consult your director as to what you can do for God.

Notice that God calls at all hours "early in the morning," at the third, sixth and even at the eleventh hour. It is rarely too late, while time and opportunities present themselves. If we begin late this should act as a greater stimulus "to work while it is day," since certainly for us "the night cometh when no man can work."

Perhaps a list of some charitable works may be useful in helping you to choose. Here are a few :—

District visiting ; visiting the sick in the hospitals, workhouses and infirmaries ; helping with the clubs for boys or girls ; utilising our talents for God—for example, painting, music, needlework, dramatic skill, etc. ; collecting stamps for the benefit of some poor mission ; teaching the ignorant ; taking up the office of a promoter in the League of the Sacred Heart ; collecting Catholic and other magazines for the sailors ; making scrap-books for the Children's Hospital ; making and repairing Church linen ; repairing the wardrobe of some poor invalid ; joining the Catholic Needlework Guild ; distributing the penny booklets of the Catholic Truth Society ; helping as librarian or sacristan ; learning to cook with a view of assisting the sick poor ; working for some orphanage or charitable institution by our pen, needle, etc. ; helping the Catholic Letter Guild.

This list is sufficient to show that there is

no lack of work, even for those who are invalids or poor. So much good can be done without money, and everywhere "the harvest is great but the labourers are few." If so far you have not undertaken any good work for God and His poor, it would be well to decide, before you finish your retreat, what you will take up in future. Begin at once, as soon as the retreat is over ; and that you may work effectually, we will briefly enumerate the dispositions which should animate the Catholic worker in God's vineyard.

1. *Obedience.* Most works of charity are carried out by guilds and societies. This implies an organisation, a head and members. Now clearly, if the Society is to work effectually, the members must obey the head and observe the rules laid down by the president. There is sometimes a temptation to substitute individual action, and to look at our little corner of the field, forgetful of the fact that the society must function as a whole, and that what is for the private good of some individual may be detrimental to the general welfare of the society.

2. *Humility.* This is absolutely necessary if our work is to bear fruit. Many are willing to work in the vineyard provided they be "stewards." They must lead, and cannot suffer to be under another. Others retire if their advice is not followed, or if they seem to be ignored. So few are ambitious of the last place that it generally remains permanently vacant. Yet surely pride cannot be instrumental in works of zeal. Jesus our Master has given us the formal precept: "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." The disciple must expect humiliations and failures in his apostolic labours, for as men treated the Master so they will treat the disciples. The Christian worker must learn not to be susceptible and uncharitable when contradictions arise. They must work in unison with each other. In a spirit of humility and charity they must learn to control their tongues and to respect the reputation of those *with whom* and *under whom* they work. The fact that these workers have a real or imaginary grievance does not dis-

pense them from keeping the first commandment, nor does it justify them in giving up a work undertaken for God. Still less should they spread idle uncharitable reports. How many good works have been ruined by sins of the tongue ! The truly humble worker will have charity with all men.

3. *Generosity* is another disposition. We must learn to give without counting, to devote ourselves heart and soul to our work, especially when others grow lukewarm. It is so much easier to start some work of charity than it is to keep it up ; this is a matter of common experience, but a few generous workers are a powerful means in sustaining a failing cause. Generosity implies putting ourselves out to serve God and be faithful to what we have undertaken. A generous Christian does not merely perform good works when it is *quite convenient*, but he is ready to give his aid "in season and out of season." For example, how many refuse to join the choir or to assist in some parochial guild because it interferes

with their dinner hour? Yet they are not so scrupulous about changing the hour of their meals when it is a question of going to the opera or theatre. Generosity implies forgetfulness of self, and we shall do good in our sphere of labour in proportion as we forget self and put God first and our neighbour second.

4. We must be *prudent*, and this implies not going beyond our strength or means. Our works of zeal must not supplant home duties ; we should never undertake more than we can do well. We must be prudent in striving to convert others lest we hinder them by an injudicious zeal. We may not compromise our faith or reputation under a pretence of zeal, nor run into the occasions of sin in the hope of doing good to a neighbour. It has been truly said "the virtues are sisters," and this is proved by the fact that to be prudent we must be obedient, which was the first disposition mentioned above.

5. *Constancy* crowns the list of virtues required by the Christian worker. Without

it all the others fall short. We must be prepared to work on in all weathers, in spite of difficulties; our work for God is not to be a series of spasmodic efforts, but a steady lifelong labour. Constancy, like every other moral virtue, can only be acquired by practice, and this consists in toiling, in turning a deaf ear to discouragement and ennui, and pursuing our way, "looking unto Jesus," Who leads His disciples onward and homeward.

What shall be the reward of the labourer in the vineyard? Holy Scripture gives us the answer: "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity;" and in St. Matthew we read: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink: I was a stranger, and you took Me in. Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these My least brethren, you did it to Me."*

* Matt. xxv.

the two great rewards promised. We shall save our own soul, and are privileged to minister to our Lord.

To be welcomed home by Jesus our Master—is it not worth toiling a lifetime for this joy? It will be given to those who have ministered to His poor. Ponder over the words of Holy Writ; they will cheer you when you are tempted to give up. It is *for God* we work; He is faithful, and while we look after His interests and those of His beloved poor, He will protect and guide us. What better passport can we have for heaven than charity? And charity is sterile unless it shows itself by the love of our neighbour. There is no purer joy on earth than to lead a sinner back to the Church. In a lifetime, how many occasions we have; and if we profit by them, ever sowing the good seed, we shall receive in God's own good time our exceeding great reward. Therefore, "In doing good, let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap, not failing."

3. SIGNS OF A RELIGIOUS VOCATION.

Those who wish to decide as to their vocation generally make a retreat for that purpose, for it is in time of prayer and solitude that God speaks to the soul. There are three principal paths in life—marriage, celibacy in the world, and a life dedicated to God either in the priesthood or in the religious life.

Some vocations spring in the first instance chiefly from the fear of God, though sooner or later fear will always give place to love ; the sense of being driven to the sense of being sweetly called. In other cases the motive of fear is less perceptible, although there is always the feeling that it is unsafe to reject the call of God.

As a rule most people seem to drift into the path either of marriage or of celibacy in the world. Providential circumstances are guiding them ; most people find themselves directed into the right path without having deliberated on the question.

Religious life or the priesthood is, on the

contrary, generally a matter of deliberation. The soul offers itself or accepts the call of God more or less willingly.

If you are in doubt as to whether you have religious vocation, you should

1. Pray earnestly that God may enlighten you.
2. Make your election (as St. Ignatius calls it); that is, weigh the pros and cons; write down the motives for and against, and then draw the logical conclusion. If you cannot decide the matter for yourself, consult your director.
3. Think what you would advise another to do under the circumstances.

If you are in doubt as to whether you are called to religious life, the following signs of a religious vocation may perhaps assist you. It is self-evident that no soul can have all these signs, since some are opposed to others. The more we find in ourselves, the more certain would be our vocation. On the other hand a person who does not perceive *some* of these marks in his soul,

may safely conclude that he has not a religious vocation.

Signs of a Religious Vocation.

1. A special attraction for prayer, together with a longing for a hidden life, and a desire to be more closely united to God, and to spend our lives near His altar.
2. A desire to have a religious vocation, together with the conviction that God is calling us. This desire is generally most strongly felt after Communion and in retreat. It may also be sensibly present in the midst of worldly pleasures.
3. To have a hatred of the world, a conviction of its hollowness and insufficiency to satisfy the soul. This feeling is generally strongest just when we are at a ball or in the midst of any worldly amusement.
4. Those to whom the world is a strong temptation may enjoy its pleasures for a time; they throw themselves

madly into its vortex, trying to persuade themselves that happiness is to be found there. But their joy is damped by the reproaches of conscience; they may succeed in silencing the still small voice for a time, but when the so-called pleasure is over, there is a strong reaction. They feel that they have not sufficient strength of character "to be in the world, and not of the world," but are convinced that they must give up all if they would save their soul. Such characters have generally strong passions, and are capable of devoting their energies to a higher end.

5. It is sometimes a sign of vocation when a person fears that God may call them; when he prays not to have it, and cannot banish the thought from his mind. Let not such a person, however, be afraid if he experiences this shrinking; if the vocation is sound it will sooner or later give place to an attraction.

Our Lord does not wish for unwilling spouses.

6. To have a great esteem for virginity, together with a strong disinclination to marriage.
7. To have zeal for souls; to realise something of the value of an immortal soul, and to desire ardently to co-operate in their salvation as far as we can.
8. To have an attraction for prayer, penance, and solitude, as a means of expiating our own sins, and obtaining the conversion of sinners. The desire to devote our whole life to obtain the conversion of one dear to us.
9. The desire to atone for great sins in our past life, and to fly from temptations which we feel too weak to resist. This is a vocation arising from the fear of God.
10. A person of a very independent character, with a great love of liberty, but who has experienced too often

into what evils it has led him, may be drawn to religious life by the desire to live under obedience in order to ensure his salvation. This is clearly a supernatural call, since it is so opposed to his character.

11. One who has a weak will, who is easily led to commit sin by love of some creature or human respect, may desire to enter religion to avoid temptation and to ensure his salvation.
12. Fear of responsibility as regards the use of wealth and time, and an earnest desire to employ both for the greater glory of God is sometimes a motive which induces people to enter religion.
13. Religious life requires a pure intention, piety, obedience, self-denial, constancy and devotedness. The candidate should have at least the germ of these virtues. A decidedly eccentric person is not fitted for the cloister.

14. Some girls wish to enter a convent, but not having a dowry or its equivalent, can only be received as lay sisters. A willingness to be received in any capacity under these conditions is a proof of a real vocation. Such a candidate will make a good humble religious.

These are a few signs of a religious vocation. A special attraction for visiting the poor, nursing the sick, or teaching children, generally indicates a vocation for an active Order engaged in one or more of the above works.

The special convent we enter is determined chiefly by four factors.

1. Can we obtain admission there?
2. Do we esteem the spirit of the order?
3. Are we fitted for its works?
4. Can we support the rule (the fasting, austerities, study, etc.)?

God cannot act inconsistently. If He calls us, He pledges Himself to give us the means to follow. Therefore, if real obstacles beset your path, you are not called

to religion now. God may smooth away the difficulties later. The chief obstacles are, general bad health, some notable infirmity—such as epileptic fits, blindness, etc.; an aged parent to maintain or tend.

Note that some great scandal in the past life does not necessarily bar the entrance to some of the severe cloistered Orders, such as the Trappists.

“The Spirit breatheth where He will,” hence the call, “to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth,” may come in different ways. Some have had the desire almost from the age of reason; to others the invitation came on the day of their first Communion; during a serious illness, or when some sorrow made them feel the emptiness of the world. It was by a miracle that God called St. Paul to be an Apostle, and to many others the inspiration has come suddenly. The rich young man to whom Jesus said: “Yet one thing is wanting to thee: sell all whatever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow Me.” He having

heard these things, became sorrowful ; for he was very rich. And Jesus, seeing Him become sorrowful, said : “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.”*

We are not told that he ever returned. How often since then has Jesus our Master sorrowed over unfaithful souls. St. Francis of Assisi, entering a church by chance as these same words of our Lord were being read, took them as a direct invitation to give up all and to follow Christ in the path of self-renunciation. Let us beware of refusing the Divine invitation, as we value our eternal salvation. The road may be rough and the cross heavy, but Jesus, our Master, is with us, and He will give us the necessary graces.

Those who would so willingly enter religion, but are hindered by circumstances, should remember that there is work for them to do in the world. When the man, “out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him,”

* St. Luke xviii.

we are told, "Jesus sent him away, saying : Return to thy house, and tell how great things God hath done to thee."* The man obeyed promptly, and performed his mission so that "all men wondered."

Thus God still sends those who would fain follow Him, to do His work in their family. Let them console themselves with the thought that there is no greater means of sanctification than to do the Will of God.

4.—ON SCRUPULOSITY.

Many pious people who are seriously desirous of serving God are tormented by scruples all their lives, others experience them only for a time.

I. What do we understand by a *scruple*?

A scruple is a doubt, which perplexes a person as to whether or not he has sinned. There may be little or no foundation for this anxiety, but a scrupulous person does not seem able to come to any definite

* St. Luke viii.

decision and only gets hopelessly confused the more he attempts to solve the question.

II. To what may we attribute *scruples*?

There are various causes of which the following are the principal :—

1. A facility of the mind for receiving every impression. This produces a state of anxiety and agitation which renders the reason incapable of judging clearly and impartially, or of distinguishing between what is voluntary and what is not.
2. A want of clearness in grasping facts due to a certain confusion of mind. A person who suffers from this defect cannot relate even the simplest event intelligibly. He repeats and contradicts himself, can only give a rambling, confused account of what he has seen or heard, and is rarely, if ever, capable of arriving at a clear decision on any subject. If he endeavours to examine his conscience, there is the same hesitation and vacillation. Now he thinks he

has sinned, now he inclines the other way.

3. A morbid imagination, that exaggerates every trifle and distorts facts, is a fruitful source of scruples, especially if it is accompanied with narrow-mindedness and a certain obstinacy of character. In such cases fear often masters reason, and so prevents the soul receiving help from the intelligence, for, as Holy Scripture says: "Fear is nothing else but a yielding up of the succours from thought." *
4. Often ignorance leads the soul to a false conception of duty or to a standard of ideal perfection, and scruples are a natural consequence.
5. Excessive self-introspection which leads to confusion and prevents our seeing clearly how far the act we are scrutinising was voluntary or not.
6. The devil tempts some timid souls by unfounded apprehensions as regards

* Wisdom xvii.

sin. They dread undertaking a good work or allowing themselves some lawful pleasure, lest they should offend God. Satan utilises their naturally timorous disposition to his own advantage and leads them to see sin in every action. If they are obstinate, their case is all the more difficult to cure. A terrible example of this kind of scrupulosity is given by the conduct of the unfortunate Nuns of Port Royal who were infected with Jansenism, and of whom a contemporary writer said: "They are as pure as angels, but as proud as devils."

Having noticed the principal sources which give rise to scruples, let us see what evils result. There are several, of which the most common are :—

1. Loss of peace of mind and happiness in the service of God.
2. The frustration of God's merciful designs in the institution of the sacraments. Confession and holy com-

munion become a source of anxious fears instead of bringing peace and joy to the soul.

3. Great loss of time in discussing as to whether an act was sinful or not.
4. Neglect of more serious faults, such as disobedience in abstaining from confession and communion, distrust of God's infinite mercy, obstinacy in clinging to their own opinion.
5. Dislike and neglect of prayer. The scrupulous pass all their time in self-examination instead of prayer. Self is the one subject of their thoughts.
6. Scruples, besides rendering the soul sad and dispirited, open the door to dangerous temptations, especially against faith and purity.

These are pernicious results, and if as you read these lines you must plead guilty to having experienced several of them, then you are scrupulous on certain points at least. Now, since you came of your own free will to make this retreat, it is evident

that you are in earnest about saving your soul, and you wish to amend. You will be glad to know what line of conduct to follow; doubtless you have frequently been told to employ the remedies here suggested, but it happens that we do not always clearly perceive our faults, and even when warned by a confessor cannot bring them home to ourselves; for unless the Holy Ghost enlightens us we are spiritually blind. Frequently in retreat the "Creator Spirit" sends down His divine rays and in His light we see light. Then we understand our faults and duties in a totally different way, and are enabled to make our resolutions for the future, and to see clearly what God would have us do. Ask Him to show you which of the following remedies you ought to employ :—

1. Choose an experienced confessor and one in whom you have confidence.
2. Do not change your director continually on the pretext that he does not understand you, and will not allow you to give interminable explanations.

3. *Obey* when you are told not to think any more about some particular point, remembering that your duty is to obey, not to argue or question your confessor's decision.
4. Never waste time in useless self-inspection, and do not exceed the time allowed you for your examination of conscience. This time should always be short.
5. Keep your hands and mind occupied with work and try to forget yourself.
6. Take up some works of zeal as far as you can.
7. Remember that your conscience is not infallible, hence you need instruction, since things which are quite right may, to you, often appear wrong. We trust to a doctor as regards remedies for our bodily ailments ; surely it is reasonable to do the same for our soul with regard to our confessor.
8. Go to confession and communion in obedience to your confessor ; never

neglect these means of grace through scrupulous anxiety.

9. Avoid making general confessions without an absolute necessity or special permission.
10. Be as cheerful as possible ; joy neutralises scruples. Put yourselves out to brighten the home.
11. Never neglect a positive duty for fear of committing a sin in its accomplishment.
12. Cultivate a spirit of filial piety and treat God as a loving Father, not as a tyrannical Master. To attain this, choose for your meditations and spiritual readings those subjects which are calculated to inspire confidence rather than fear. Ask advice as to the spiritual books you use.
13. When tempted by sinful thoughts, turn your attention to some work that occupies the mind, and do not make violent efforts to forget, for this is tantamount to committing them to memory. You may be *conscious* of

these unwelcome thoughts, but do not *heed* them. You do not cease your work, because a bluebottle annoys you by its unpleasant buzzing. Treat scruples in the same way and never forget that we cannot sin accidentally.

These means generously and constantly employed will either deliver you from your scruples, or if these anxieties still persist, they will enable you to sanctify your soul in spite of the "fears within" which God may allow for your greater good. Above all be docile, for those who obey are sure of the victory. Since you are spiritually blind on certain points, it is only common sense to let yourself be guided. Your watchword must be "Unquestioning obedience"; there is no other path of safety for the scrupulous.

5. ON PRAYER.

In retreat the greater part of the time is devoted to prayer, for mere reflections on

the truths of religion would remain sterile unless reduced to practice with the help of God's grace, which cannot be obtained without prayer. It also forms part of our daily duty as Christians, for "we ought always to pray, and not to faint." This clearly shows that prayer is an obligation, and often it is also a real pleasure. There are times when we experience a great desire to pray, and the hours spent before the tabernacle pass too quickly. We experience an ardent desire for Holy Communion; our thoughts turn frequently to God; there is a great feeling of joy, and virtue seems easy to practice. This is when the soul is in a state of consolation; God is making His presence sensibly felt. He communicates abundant graces, and gives supernatural lights. We may compare this to the warm summer weather, when all looks bright and beautiful under the influence of the sun's rays. As it is difficult to realise on a bright sunny day that there are such things as cutting winds and cold biting frosts, though we know well

that it is so, so it is almost impossible in times of consolation to realise that there is such a thing as desolation, though we know that in the spiritual life we may expect a "time of clouds." There are days when prayer is distasteful ; the time hangs on our hands ; we feel cold, weary, dispirited, and disinclined to receive Holy Communion. We have nothing to say to our Heavenly Father. Perhaps a strong temptation, like a high wind, threatens to overthrow us. All God's saints have experienced these vicissitudes in the spiritual life. St. Theresa tells us in all simplicity how she used, when in desolation, to shake her hour-glass that the sands might run out more quickly. What wonder, then, if at such times we feel as if we should like to put on the clock.

Between these extremes there is a kind of neutral state, in which the soul is calm, but has neither great sweetness in prayer nor desolation.

Whence come consolation and desolation, and how are we to conduct ourselves in

these different states? It is well to know, so let us investigate these questions that we may be the better enabled to take our resolutions as regards our duty to God.

Consolation is a gift of God. He sends it in order to help on the soul in the path of virtue; to strengthen it for future trials. Thus Jesus, our Master, allowed His apostles to witness His transfiguration on Mount Thabor, that they might be prepared to contemplate His agony in Gethsemane.

These spiritual consolations are often given to great sinners, in order to detach them from the world and attach them to the service of God. They are also frequently accorded to saints, as a reward of heroic efforts. To those Christians who are neither great sinners nor great saints, God often gives His consolation intermittently as a help on the road. Were we always spiritually consoled, we should be tempted to serve God for His gifts rather than for Himself. We may wish for consolation, and pray for it, provided we be resigned if

God should refuse to grant our prayer—
prepared :

“To toil on and soothe ourselves with weeping,
Till life's long night shall break in endless love.

In Heaven we shall eternally rejoice in the sunshine of God's presence ; so we can well afford to wait a little.

If God visits us by His consolations, let us receive His graces with humility, acknowledging that we are unworthy to receive them, and remembering that after the sunshine come the clouds. God wills that we should detach our hearts, and not let our devotedness in the service of God be in direct proportion to the spiritual consolation we receive.

It is always possible to have solid consolation when spiritual sweetness is denied. This consists in an energetic will to serve God, and to do our duty, come what may, in a real longing for holiness, and in generosity in the performance of our daily duties.

Before leaving the subject of spiritual consolation, it may be well to caution th

reader against a spurious imitation of which the devil is the author. Thus the father of lies will sometimes give a kind of sweetness in prayer in order to get the unwary Christian to neglect positive duties. For example, a woman may spend hours in the Church which should be given to her husband and children, or to her home duties. She finds such consolation in prayer that she cannot leave her devotions, and justifies her conduct by saying that she must put the interests of her soul first. This line of reasoning is obviously false, and the devil has succeeded in deluding such a soul by his spurious consolations. "By their fruits you shall know them," holds good here.

The state of spiritual desolation has been described, and most earnest Christians know by experience what it is. God sends it either that He may exercise His children in virtue, or as a punishment for infidelities, negligence and tepidity. Hence those who are advanced in virtue, and those who are lukewarm, may alike experience this trial.

How are we to conduct ourselves when in a state of spiritual desolation? The first rule to follow is not to be surprised or disheartened, but to serve God with fidelity in spite of difficulties. If we feel that we have brought the punishment on ourselves, evidently this is a strong reason why we should bear it patiently as an expiation for our sins.

Just as the traveller who has important business to transact presses on in all weathers, so the Christian must keep steadily on in the narrow path in spite of interior difficulties. It may appear discouraging, we do not see our progress, but God will bless our efforts, and after toiling apparently in vain for days or weeks, in His own good time our Saviour will make His presence felt, and when the storm is over, like the apostles on the lake, we shall find ourselves where we would fain be, that is, peacefully resting at our beloved Master's feet. St. John tells us that when they had taken "Him into the ship," "presently the ship was at the land to which they were going."

In like manner the Christian soul makes rapid progress when the Master is present, but we must remember that His Divine presence generally makes itself sensible to the soul to reward it for having fought bravely. True this blessing may be reserved for eternity, but who can say how near that is? Meanwhile "courage and confidence" must be our watchword. The Master is near, intimately united to us by His grace. He counts each effort; upholds our failing strength, and will manifest Himself to us in His own good time.

Beware above all of changing your resolutions when in spiritual aridity, when it is too dark to see clearly. Hold fast to the resolutions you took when God vouchsafed you this light, and do not gratify the devil by changing your route; perform your spiritual exercises as usual; wait on God with patience, and "make not haste in time of clouds." When in spiritual desolation meditate on the second chapter of Ecclesiasticus, which is subjoined: you will find it most comforting.

We will conclude with a few hints which may be useful.

1. Continue your prayer in spite of distractions, or turn your distractions into prayer : remember that involuntary thoughts cannot stain the soul. When they annoy, you put up with them patiently and calmly. "What can't be cured must be endured."
2. Do not seek purely your personal satisfaction in prayer—go to prayer as to an altar of sacrifice to worship God and to immolate yourself if God exact it.
3. Raise your heart to God frequently during the day. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
4. Suffering is sometimes the only prayer of which we are capable, but God sees the heart. Be content in moments of great pain to turn your thoughts to God, and let your glance rest on the crucifix as a sign that you resign yourself to His will—make

this agreement with our loving Saviour.

5. Do not lose confidence when God seems deaf to your prayer. He will give what you ask or *something better*.
6. Take a respectful attitude when praying—the courtiers of the King of kings must not neglect the rules of etiquette.
7. Have a great esteem for the prayers of the Church. Remember they are sacramentals.
8. Do not give our God occasion to include you among the nine who did not return and give glory to God. The Holy Mass is the best time to offer our thanksgiving.
9. Do not *overburden* yourself with spiritual exercises; never neglect them without necessity, but if pressed for time say fewer prayers rather than scramble through your usual devotions. Quality is, in this case, preferable to quantity when both cannot be had.

10. Have recourse to God in all your difficulties, speak to Him as to a loving Father, and cultivate a spirit of childlike simplicity in your prayers.
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ECCLESIASTICUS. (Chapter II.)

1. Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation.

2. Humble thy heart and endure: incline thy ear, and receive the words of understanding: and make not haste in the time of clouds.

3. Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end.

4. Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience.

5. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.

6. Believe God, and He will recover

thee : and direct thy way, and trust in Him. Keep His fear, and grow old therein.

7. Ye that fear the Lord, wait for His mercy : and go not aside from Him lest ye fall.

8. Ye that fear the Lord, believe Him : and your reward shall not be made void.

9. Ye that fear the Lord, hope in Him : and mercy shall come to you for your delight.

10. Ye that fear the Lord, love Him : and your hearts shall be enlightened.

11. My children, behold the generations of men : and know ye that no one hath hoped in the Lord, and hath been confounded.

12. For who hath continued in His commandment, and hath been forsaken ? or who hath called upon Him, and He despised him ?

13. For God is compassionate and merciful, and will forgive sins in the day of tribulation : and He is a protector to all that seek Him in truth.

14. Wo to them that are of a double heart, and to wicked lips, and to hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways.

15. Wo to them that are faint-hearted, who believe not God : and therefore they shall not be protected by Him.

16. Wo to them that have lost patience, and that have forsaken the right ways, and have gone aside into crooked ways.

17. And what will they do, when the Lord shall begin to examine ?

18. They that fear the Lord, will not be incredulous to His word : and they that love Him will keep His way.

19. They that fear the Lord, will seek after the things that are well pleasing to Him : and they that love Him, shall be pleased with His law.

20. They that fear the Lord, will prepare their hearts, and in His sight will sanctify their souls.

21. They that fear the Lord, keep His commandments, and will have patience even until His visitation.

22. Saying : If we do not penance we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men.

23. For according to His greatness, so also is His mercy with him.

6. ON TEMPTATION.

The following principles are set down as likely to be instructive to the exercitant, who should, however, be cautious of the danger of misapplying principles to his own personal concerns. It is never safe in such matters to dispense with the living rule of an experienced director. This holds especially in regard to the chapters on Vocation, Temptation, and Scrupulosity.

Before the Temptation.

1. Remember that temptations generally come unexpectedly ; hence, be on the alert.
2. Do not fear them inordinately ; fear paralyses the energies of the soul and prevents action.

3. Carefully avoid all occasions of sin—*e.g.*, do not keep a bad book which you wish to read, though you know that it would be a sin to do so.
4. Try to realise that temptations are inevitable. Struggling against temptation strengthens the soul, as wrestling strengthens the body.
5. Temptations, when resisted, help us to acquire virtue and experience.
6. Be assured that each temptation is permitted by God, and that He will help you to resist.
7. Never shirk a duty for fear of temptation—*e.g.*, do not neglect prayer from fear of distractions, or refrain from alms-giving from fear of vanity.
8. It is a good sign that we have temptations, for all God's servants have experienced them.
9. Remember that the devil cannot penetrate into our soul. He does not know what passes there except in so far as we reveal it ; nor can he force our free will.

During the Temptation.

1. Hold firm ; resist from the outset, and pray earnestly for help.
2. Keep calm ; do not imagine that you have yielded because the sinful thought is suggested to you by the devil. There are many thoughts *in* us that are not *of* us. Temptation is not sin, since Jesus our Master was tempted, “yet without sin.”
3. Resist the temptation each time it presents itself ; thus you acquire fresh merit.
4. Remember that *indeliberate* pleasure at the thought of yielding to the devil’s suggestion is not a sin. Sin is a perverse act of *the will* ; we cannot sin accidentally.
5. No matter how sorely you are pressed, you are victorious as long as you go on fighting. You are only conquered when you lay down your arms and desert your colours.
6. Do not reason with the devil, or try to

find excuses for yielding in this particular case. Eve reasoned and fell.

7. Seek help from your confessor or one who can help you. Do not let the devil persuade you that no one else ever had such temptations. Often they vanish as we disclose them.
8. In case of temptation to commit some sins of thought, it is good to take up, when possible, some occupation that absorbs the mind. If the temptation continues, and evil images are still present, take no notice of them. Treat the devil with contempt, and often he desists. Should the thoughts persist, go on with your work; endure them as you would a noise which disturbs you, and try to keep calm.
9. Avoid idle brooding over the temptation, or remaining alone with the devil.
10. Act energetically; for example, when tempted to remain idly in bed, the only remedy is to *get up*. While

you remain in bed praying for grace to conquer the temptation, you will probably go to sleep again.

11. Make an act of the contrary virtue. Suppose you are tempted to say something cutting to a person the next time you meet him. To conquer the temptation, put yourself out to render that person some service on the first occasion.
12. Use the words of Holy Scripture as weapons, in imitation of our Lord. Thus, against temptations of worldliness oppose the text, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"
13. Flight is sometimes a remedy. You must give up the society, when possible, of anyone who tempts you against faith or purity. You must not keep bad books in the house; you must avoid places where you are in the habit of committing sins.
14. Other temptations, such as human respect, must be fought out. Here we must hold up the flag of duty, and our wounds at least must be in front.

15. Try some little acts of mortification, for some devils can only be driven out "by prayer and fasting."
16. Read over your motives for resisting these special temptations.
17. You are not alone in the struggle, for since it is out of hatred of God that the devil attacks you, our Heavenly Father is pledged to defend you both for His own honour, and because He loves you with an everlasting love.

After the Temptation.

1. Ask yourself, "Did I wish to experience this temptation? Did I take *deliberate* pleasure in it?" If the answer is in the negative, you have not sinned.
2. Remember the devil has only left you "for a time," so be on your guard.
3. Do not worry because you cannot be quite sure whether you have yielded in some slight degree or not. Make an act of contrition for any possible sin of negligence, and do not even try to solve the question. It is not always possible to decide exactly how far we have given in, nor is it necessary.

4. Thank God for helping you to resist the tempter.
 5. If you know that you have fallen into sin, then, with a *calm*, deep sorrow, make your act of contrition, and profit by your fall to pick up the jewel of humility. Thank God that you did not sin more grievously : rise *without delay*. Avoid worrying and discouragement, and strive to repair your fault by renewed fervour. It is useless to spend hours or days in scolding yourself. Think no more of your fault until your next confession.
 6. See if you cannot learn some useful lessons from the enemy's tactics. Note the causes that led to your fall, or the means that enabled you to resist most effectually, and resolve to avoid past errors, and to employ on a future occasion those means which served your purpose.
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7. HINTS ON MORTIFICATION.

As Christians, we are bound to mortify ourselves, for Christ has said: "If any man will come after me, let him deny him-

self, and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

Hence all are bound to practice mortification in so far as it is necessary to avoid sin. But if we are in earnest we shall not be content with merely doing what we are obliged to do, for just as a man is liable to fall over a cliff if he goes too near the edge, so we are exposed to fall into sin if we never deny ourselves, except when it is an obligation.

In retreat it is good to specify a few acts of self-denial which we propose to perform voluntarily for the love of God. It is better to choose those which are most opposed to our besetting sin. The following list may supply a few. Many more might be given, and occasions are never wanting. None of those mentioned affect the health. Do not imagine that you are obliged to take up *all* these practices, or that you ought to perform them *each time* the opportunity presents itself. Such a line of conduct would be harmful. In your discouragement you would probably throw up all your

* St. Luke ix.

good resolutions. It is well to vary our acts of self-denial, and to determine the number rather than the kind. It only you make two or three acts of self-denial daily, it is a sign of fervour.

1. Do not open a letter immediately, and only read once anything in your praise if you are tempted to be vain about it.
2. Wait a few hours or days before reading some new book, or defer reading the last chapter.
3. Do not look at your work with such complacency that it engenders pride.
4. Avoid looking in shop windows during Lent, or on Fridays, especially in those which have the most attraction for you.
5. Look at something repulsive, at least when duty exacts it; do not be afraid to approach the sick and poor; render them some service.
6. Do not press to look at something which is interesting others.
7. If you hear your name, do not ask what was said about you.
8. Refuse to listen to what has been said for or against you.

9. Bear in silence any noise that fidgets you.
10. Listen patiently to an oft-told tale.
11. Bear, without complaining, anything that offends your sense of smell, *e.g.*, when the house is newly painted.
12. Deprive yourself of scents, and give the money they would cost to the poor.
13. Be diligent in rising at your appointed hour.
14. Avoid lazy postures, lolling on the couch, and always seeking your ease.
15. Bear some little pain in silence.
16. Take the weather as God sends it.
17. Do not grumble when the food is not quite to your taste.
18. Eat less of anything you like ; or, what is more difficult, take a little of something you dislike.
19. Defer buying something that has just become fashionable.
20. Avoid speaking of yourself if vanity is your particular failing.
21. Say some prayers when alone, holding your arms in the form of a cross.
22. Decide what you can reasonably spend in dress, and do not exceed that sum.
23. Keep strictly to your rule of life, unless

charity or necessity obliges you to deviate.

24. Offer yourself cheerfully to do some disagreeable piece of work.
25. Refrain from habitually choosing the best for yourself.
26. Put yourself out to amuse others, even when you are feeling melancholy.
27. Wait upon yourself when you can.
28. After any special fault, to recite the seven penitential psalms, kneeling before a crucifix.
29. Make a list of texts of Scripture or citations from spiritual authors on the virtue you most need, or the fault you commit the oftenest, and kneeling before the crucifix spend a few minutes in learning them by heart. To do this so many times a week in Lent and other fast days would be a real mortification.
30. If not suffering from insomnia, just when settling off to sleep, rise and say a Hail Mary.
31. Eat what is necessary for your health, even when you have no appetite.
32. Take disagreeable remedies faithfully.
33. Render service to those who have disobliged you.

CHAPTER VI.

I.—THE MONTHLY RECOLLECTION.

ONE great means to ensure fidelity to our good resolutions is to make a monthly retreat. If you have not been in the habit of so doing, reader, make the resolution to adopt this practice in future. It involves a little self-denial, but the result will amply repay you for the sacrifice.

The following hints will show you how to make this monthly retreat :—

I. Take some *definite* day of the month. Those who are engaged in business would, of course, choose a Sunday. If you cannot give a whole day, give a few hours, or at least one hour.

II. Go to Mass and Communion on that day, if possible. Some people, however, prefer choosing a day when they can go to confession; then they communicate the next day.

III. If you are in the habit of making a meditation daily, choose the subject with reference to your retreat, or in view of your special needs.

IV. Spend one hour or half-an-hour in examining yourself as to how you have kept the resolutions you made at your last retreat. See if you have lost or gained ; read over the motives which urged you to take these resolutions, and renew your firm intention of keeping them. Make a sincere act of contrition for any shortcomings, and note not only in what you have specially failed, but see why you fell into sin. It is good to mention the last fact in confession. This examination should be made in the church, if possible in presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

V. You can, if time permits, make the Way of the Cross as an expiation for the faults of the month.

VI. Finish by making the preparation for death, which, "like a thief in the night," may surprise us before another month has passed away.

VII. Attend Benediction, if convenient, to ask God's blessing on the resolutions which you have received.

In case you can only give an hour a month to this exercise, then take only the fourth point, viz., the examination of conscience

2.—MEDITATION ON THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

“ Fight the good fight of faith : lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art called, and hast confessed a good confession before many witnesses.” *

1. *The Christian warfare is a necessity, because :—*

1. The life of man is a continual warfare.
2. If we do not employ our members for God, they will be used as weapons of sin. “ Neither yield ye your members as instruments of iniquity . . . but present yourselves to God and your members as instruments of justice.” †
3. Time is brief. (What year will be engraved on your tombstone?)
4. We have three inveterate foes : the devil, the world and the flesh.
5. We are commanded to put on the armour of light.
6. Jesus warns us, “ If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” ‡
7. All the saints have waged an incessant spiritual warfare.

* I. Tim. vi.

† Rom. v.

‡ St. Luke ix.

II. *What weapons are we to employ?*

St. Paul answers the question. "Put ye on the whole armour of God . . . Take therefore unto you the armour of God. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: In all things taking the shield of faith . . . And take unto you the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."*

Notice how St. Paul treats the Christian as a knight of noble birth, and not as a serf who went to the battle with a single weapon.

- a. "*Stand therefore.*" The first step in our training is to "stand to arms."
- b. "*Having your loins girt about with truth*" —i.e., the belt which signifies sincerity in our resolution to fight for God.
- c. "*Having on the breastplate of justice*" —i.e., purity of soul, which defends us against the devil.
- d. "*Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,*" that we may be prompt to run in the path of God's commandments.

* Ephes. vi.

- e. "*The shield of faith*"—i.e., the consideration of the motives which we find in our holy religion.
- f. "*Take unto you the helmet of salvation*"—i.e., the hope of eternal salvation.
- g. "*The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.*" Note how our Saviour used this sword of the Spirit in the desert.

III. *Advantages of using these weapons.*

- a. That we may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.
- b. Because we have to wrestle with mighty powers, "the spirits of wickedness in high places," the devil and his angels.
- c. "That we may be able to resist in the evil day" when trials cross our path, and burden weighs us down.
- d. "To stand in all things perfect"—that is, fully equipped for the battle of life.

IV. *With what dispositions must we fight?*

- a. *Promptitude.* "When the battle is *now* at hand, . . . let not your heart be discouraged, be not afraid, do not give back, fear ye them not."*

Like Celts, ready to attack; like Teutons, ready to stand under fire.

* Deut. ix

Indecision has lost many a battle.
 “Aut nunc, aut nunquam,” now or never. Our enemy never hesitates.

b. Confidence. “Do manfully and be of good heart : fear not, nor be ye dismayed at their sight : for the Lord thy God He Himself is thy Leader, and will not leave thee nor forsake thee.”*

“Take courage and be strong ; for thou shalt divide by lot to this people, the land for which I swore to their fathers, that I would deliver it to them.”†

c. Self-restraint. For “every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things : and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown ; but we an incorruptible one.”‡ The true soldier of Christ uses the things of this world as the Jews of old in times of battle used “the springs, of which they seemed rather to refresh themselves a little than to drink their fill.” §

d. Courage. “Give me constancy in my mind, that I may despise him : and fortitude that I may overthrow him.” ||

* Deut. xxxi. † Josue i. ‡ 1 Cor. ix.

§ Judith vii. || Judith ix.

e. Obedience. To the rules of prudence. To our plan of campaign. To the orders of our captain. To the voice of conscience.

f. Perseverance. That you may be able to say on your death-bed (when inevitably you must say "I have finished my course"), "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith."

V. Application. See if your weapons are rusty or bright with use. Note which need repairing. Take some practical resolution.

3. THE PARTICULAR EXAMINATION.

The particular examination is a method invented by St. Ignatius to enable the Christian to conquer his passions. It consists in attacking one defect at a time.

I. We first take some definite resolution. On waking in the morning we foresee as far as possible the occasions when we may be tempted to break our resolution. We then resolve firmly not to yield, and ask for grace to keep it.

II. In the middle of the day we examine ourselves on the subject, observing the points following :—

1. Place yourself in the presence of God ;
thank Him for all His benefits,
natural and supernatural.
2. Ask for grace to see and detest your faults.
3. Examine your faults and write down
the number if possible, comparing
the faults of the morning with those
of the previous examination.
4. Make a sincere act of contrition.
5. Make a firm purpose of amendment.

Remarks.

- a. St. Ignatius recommends that we
should make some exterior sign,
such as placing the hand on the
heart as soon as we perceive that we
have broken our resolution. This
can be done without anyone noticing
it. A few beads threaded on a double
string so that each bead can be
slipped up or down is sometimes
carried in the pocket for this purpose.
- b. Compare the number of faults in two
consecutive days, weeks, months, etc.
- c. It is sometimes an encouragement to
mark victories as well as faults.
- d. Our besetting sin generally furnishes
the matter of a particular examination,
- e. It is a common experience that when

we begin to examine ourselves on some particular point we seem to fall much oftener. This may arise from the fact that, our attention being drawn to this sin, we perceive our faults more readily. Or the increase in the number may be due to more vigorous attacks on the part of the devil.

- f.* The beginner must generally choose some fault to correct. One more advanced in the spiritual life will often take a virtue to acquire.
- g.* To have a clear idea of our progress we must compare our faults with our victories; thus, a day that we can mark three faults and five victories, is a better day than one on which we can mark two faults and no victories.
- h.* It is usual to begin by conquering those defects which disedify others.
- i.* To prevent routine, it is sometimes useful to change our particular examination.
- j.* It is always wise to take our confessor's advice as to our subject of examination.

Examples of subjects for particular Examination.

- i.* To employ our time usefully.

2. Never to speak uncharitably of our neighbour.
3. To obey promptly.
4. To be punctual in performing our duties.
5. To keep back angry words.
6. Not to speak of ourselves without necessity.
7. Always to own our faults.
8. To avoid teasing others, etc.

III. In the evening, after our general examination of conscience, we make our particular examination in the same way as at noon.

Some people who lead very busy lives might not find this method practical. It can, however, be simplified. Those who are in earnest about correcting their faults could at least mark each night the number of falls ; or, if this be impossible, the examination might be made weekly. It is usual to devote about ten minutes to each examination ; but suppose that you can only manage to give five minutes a day to this exercise, then remember that the most important points are the examination of the faults, the act of contrition, and the purpose of amendment.

4. MEDITATION ON OUR DAILY WORK.

We are told in Holy Scripture, "Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly,"* and again, "Whatsoever you do, do from the heart as to the Lord, and not unto men."† In retreat it is well to examine how we perform our daily work, so let us meditate prayerfully on the subject for a few moments.

I. How are we to regard our daily work?

1. As a *duty* and necessity whatever be our condition in life. The poor have their work marked out, the rich have more latitude to determine it for themselves, but *all* must work.

2. Work is also, within reasonable limits, a *pleasure*. Think what a purgatory it would be to be condemned to perpetual inactivity. How we pity the paralytic!

3. Work is a great *safeguard* against:—

a. Our own self, against morbid and melancholy thoughts.

b. It helps us to bear trials.

c. It is a shield against temptation.

d. It is a remedy and preventative for scruples.

* Ecc. ix. † Col. iii.

4. As a *source of strength* for the character, for to work steadily pre-supposes energy and courage, and the will, like the body, is strengthened by exercise.

5. All virtue *is a source of merit*; hence work undertaken and performed for God merits an eternal reward.

II. What must we avoid as regards work?

Those faults which would hinder us, or render our work useless. Lazy people would be apt to commit such faults as:—Indolence, dawdling, dreaming over their work, being discouraged, shirking what they dislike, want of order, routine and negligence; being ashamed of work, despising others for working. Industrious people, on the contrary, are liable to be inconstant, to undertake too much, to give way to precipitation, to meddle with other people's concerns, to do all themselves, rather than take pains to teach their children or their servants to work; to take everything on their own shoulders, to give their inferiors no responsibility, and thus make them less self-reliant. (This kind of conduct is very harmful to inferiors.)

III. Precautions to take as regards work.

- a.* We must have a fixed number of hours daily.
- b.* Do it at the right time (not turning night into day.)
- c.* Do it in the right place (do not stay in bed doing needlework.)
- d.* Chose work suited to our health, age, position, and capabilities.
- e.* Always try to improve. This will result if we "do it earnestly."
- f.* Give each kind of work its relative importance.
- g.* Work with a pure intention.

IV. Note when you fail the oftenest, and make a practical resolution on this point.

5.—ON EXTREME UNCTION.

Extreme Unction is the sacrament of the dying, and every practical Catholic hopes to receive it at the hour of his death. Strangely enough it is the sacrament of which most Catholics know the least, and yet when the hour comes for them to receive the last sacraments, they are too weak to learn much about them. How is it that people are so ignorant regarding Extreme

Unction? Often it arises from a fear of death, so that people shrink from learning about a sacrament which reminds them of the hour when they must pass hence.

As children we learned our catechism, the sacraments were all explained to us, but as years pass, how apt we are to forget what we are not required to put in practice frequently. In retreat we meditate on the great truths; we think of our last end, so this is a good time to refresh our memory as to the institution and effects of the sacrament of Extreme Unction. We shall reap the benefits of our labour, for a deeper knowledge of the graces, which Extreme Unction brings to the soul, will enable us to receive it with greater devotion as we lie on our death-bed.

"It is appointed unto all men once to die, and after the death judgment." How familiar these words sound, and yet they rarely fail to send a thrill of fear through the heart each time we hear them. Death is the separation of soul and body; it involves the sacrifice of all we love most. Then, since we can die but once, we have no

experience of what it is like, and the unknown always terrifies us. The human mind can form no conception of the next stage of our existence. True, we know by faith that we shall be rewarded or punished according to our deeds ; but we can realise neither the exceeding great reward of heaven, the excruciating pains of purgatory nor the torments of the lost.

Every human being must sooner or later hear the call, “ *Arise, go forth, thy resting place is not here ;*” but to each it is a summons to an unknown world “from whose bourn no traveller returns.” Death is the moment which the devil chooses for his last assault. The strong man, armed, would fain force an entrance into the christian soul. What wonder the brave fear death when they think of the dread hour of separation, of temptation and of plunging alone into eternity!

Jesus, our loving Saviour, Who Himself tasted the bitterness of death, comes to the assistance of His disciples. In His infinite mercy He has instituted a sacrament which is to prepare the Christian for the passage from life to death. During our Lord’s

public ministry we read that He sent out apostles to heal the sick by anointing them with oil, and their miraculous cures typified the sacrament of Extreme Unction which was to be one of the seven sacraments, instituted by Christ and bequeathed to the Church.

St. James, in his clear, forcible language, sums up the teaching of the Church on the subject of Extreme Unction. He says: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him." *Here we have duly specified the *subject*, *minister*, *matter*, *form* and *effects* of the sacrament.

Who are capable of receiving Extreme Unction? From the words quoted above, we see that there are three conditions:—(1) The recipient of Extreme Unction *must be baptised*, for St. James writing to the faithful mentions: "is any one sick *among you?*" that is, among those who had been baptised into the Christian Church; (2)

* St. James v,

Only those who are *dangerously ill* can receive it; (3) It is for those who *have sinned*, as we see from the words: “*If he be in sins they shall be forgiven him.*” Hence children who have the use of reason can also receive this sacrament; but it cannot be given to infants or to born idiots. Since this sacrament does not imprint a character on the soul, it can be received as often as we are in danger of death by sickness, and if relapse follows recovery the sacrament can be repeated. It can even be given if the patient is unconscious.

“*Let him bring in the priests of the Church.*” These words are imperative, and imply an obligation, at the same time we see they refer only to those who are seriously ill, and unable to leave their home. It is therefore a sin to neglect to receive Extreme Unction when dangerously ill, or to deprive another of so doing by our negligence. The priests are the ministers of the sacrament, and except, in urgent cases, the parish priest should give it. If there is danger of the sick person expiring before the parish priest arrives,

any priest on the spot can administer the sacrament.

“*Let them pray over him.*” The Church has prescribed certain prayers for the administration of Extreme Unction. Some of these prayers constitute the form of the sacrament, which is as follows:—“Through this Holy Unction ✠, and of His most tender mercy, may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing, Amen.” At each Unction a different sense is mentioned, and should the person be at the last extremity, the form need only be recited once, in that case the priest concludes thus:—“May the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by thy senses.” The prayers used in giving Extreme Unction are very beautiful. It is a good exercise to read them devoutly in the first person, as a preparation for death, that we may be able to realise better their meaning when they are offered for us. An excellent preparation for receiving Extreme Unction spiritually will be found in Father Galway’s “Watches of the Sacred Passion,” Vol. II., p. 510.

“*Anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*” The anointing with oil is therefore the matter of the sacrament. The Church for this purpose employs olive oil which is solemnly blessed by a bishop on Maundy Thursday. She would teach us that, just as oil strengthens the body, gives light and heals, so the grace of the sacrament of Extreme Unction strengthens us for our last struggle with the devil and our own evil passions. It also enlightens the soul, and enables the Christian who receives it worthily to realise the nothingness of the things of earth when compared to eternity, and finally it softens the bitterness of death by relieving the mind of anxieties. In addition it frequently relieves pain, and restores health when God sees it be to expedient. The Christian is anointed “*in the name of the Lord*” to shew that God is the source of all our strength, and in Him we must place our confidence.

“*The prayer of faith shall save the sick man, and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him.*” Here we see the precious effects of the sacrament. It takes away sin,

for Extreme Unction is the completion of the sacrament of Penance, by it, venial sins are forgiven, and provided the patient has attrition, it even remits mortal sin when the person is unable to make a confession. Hence Extreme Unction becomes accidentally a sacrament of the dead. It also delivers us from the remains of sin. Let us see in what these remains consist. In proportion as we sin our soul becomes weaker, we strengthen our bad inclinations, and incur temporal punishment. Sin drags us down to earth, it enslaves us to the things of this world. We experience a disrelish for spiritual food, and, little by little, bad habits master the will. Extreme Unction weakens these attachments or remedies these evils, and helps the soul to rise above these consequences or remains of sin. Thus our merciful Saviour comforts and strengthens the Christian at the hour of death. By the grace we receive, hope springs up anew in the soul, resignation to God's will becomes easy, and peace is restored. Then we are strong to resist the devil, for sin no longer has the same hold on the soul. With the

help of God we can think of the past without despair or discouragement, since sin, the source of our anxiety, has been forgiven. We can look forward to the future, knowing that God is with us, and that we shall not walk alone in the valley of death.

What shall we render to God for all His gifts? He dispels the gloomy fear of death, enables us to resist temptation and fills the contrite soul with peace and confidence.

But what are the dispositions which should animate the Christian who is preparing to receive Extreme Unction?

1. Since it is of its nature a sacrament of the living, it is necessary that we be in a state of grace ; hence, if possible, we must make our confession ; attrition will suffice, God does not exact perfect contrition. This state of grace includes being in charity with all and freely forgiving those who have injured us.

2. We must have faith and confidence in God and in the efficacy of the sacrament of Extreme Unction.

We notice in Holy Scripture that our Saviour always exacted faith from those who came to be healed. It was the condition on which their healing depended.

3. We should pray earnestly that the sacraments may bring us, in all their fullness, the special graces mentioned above.

4. It is fitting that we should resign ourselves to God's will, being disposed to live or die as God may deem it expedient. Our interior disposition should be "not my will but Thine be done."

As we think over the graces which our Heavenly Father has prepared for His sinful children at the hour of death, our hearts should "burn within us." It should be our frequent prayer during life, that we may not die without receiving the last sacraments of the Church. If we thus esteem these means of grace then we shall not, when dangerously ill, tempt God by our delay in receiving this sacrament. We shall not defer it until there is no hope of recovery, for the sacrament is received with greater fruit when the patient is in a state of consciousness. Hence, as far as it depends on us, we must be determined to receive Extreme Unction as soon as we are grievously ill, and to warn others when it is time for them to receive it. Often relations and friends, with mistaken kindness, refuse

to tell the sick person that he is dangerously ill, they will even assert the contrary. No earnest Catholic would be guilty of such a fault as to deprive the sick of the graces of the last sacraments. Experience shows us how beneficial they are both to the soul and body, and it is a great mistake to imagine that their reception hastens death.

We have spoken of the "last sacraments"; it may be well to name them and mention the order in which they are given.

If the sick person is able to speak, he first receives the sacrament of penance as a preparation for the two sacraments which follow. When possible Holy Viaticum is given next and, of course, the patient need not observe the Eucharistic fast for its reception. Lastly, Extreme Unction is given and, while the priest is conferring it, the relations and friends should assist the sick person by their prayers.

When the last sacraments are to be given the following preparations should be made before the priest arrives. The room, bedding, etc. should be clean (it is a Christian practice to have only holy pictures on the

walls of a bedroom). Out of respect for the sacrament, the parts of the body which are to be anointed should be washed, and the sheet so arranged that the feet of the patient can easily be uncovered. At a little distance from the bed, place a table with a clean white cloth. The crucifix should be placed on the table with a blessed candle alight on each side. As the priest always rinses his fingers before and after touching the Blessed Sacrament, a glass of water and a clean towel should be provided. This is all that is required for administering Holy Viaticum, for Extreme Unction a few pieces of clean cotton wool and some small pieces of bread should be in readiness. The cotton wool is used to wipe the parts which have been anointed ; it must be burnt afterwards. The bread is required for the priest to cleanse his fingers after anointing the sick person. It is also usual to have a vessel at hand containing holy water.

6. AFFECTIONS AND REFLECTIONS IN PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Place yourself at the foot of the Cross ;
contemplate Jesus dying for your sins

His limbs are nailed to the cross ; His sight is failing ; His whole being is convulsed in the agony of death. The tears fall from His sacred eyes, He utters a strong cry, and His breathing becomes more laboured ; then we hear the last drawn sigh, and the Sacred Heart ceases to throb. Our Saviour yields up His pure soul to His heavenly Father. "All is consummated."

So too, for us, the moment must come when our eyes shall close in death. It is the only *certainty* to which we can look forward. "It is appointed unto all men once to die." Let us, while in full possession of our senses and faculties, offer to our heavenly Father the sacrifice of our lives, that we may have the full merit of our offering. Perhaps when death comes "as a thief in the night," we may be unconscious and thus unable to make the sacrifice of our life, or we may have fallen into second childhood, and be unable to realise that we are on the threshold of eternity. Many are cut off by sudden death, and find themselves in the next world without having had any previous warning, beyond the

reminder given to all : “ Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.”*

During the precious hours of this retreat we have thought of death ; we have seen what folly it is to reject the thought of that which is inevitable, and we are disposed to make God this sacrifice with all the fervour of which we are capable. The beautiful prayer of St. Ignatius will furnish us with a wealth of solemn thoughts which can be applied to death. Meditate on the “ *Sume et suscipe* ” of St. Ignatius, till the lessons it teaches, like good seed, sink deeply into your soul and ripen into convictions.

LATIN.

Sume et suscipe, Domine, universam meam libertatem. Accipe memoriam, intellectum atque voluntatem omnem. Quidquid habeo, vel possideo, mihi largitus es : id tibi totum restituo, ac tuæ prorsus voluntati trado gubernandum. Amorem tui solum cum gratia tua mihi dones, et dives sum satis nec aliud quidquam ultra posco.

ENGLISH.

Take, O Lord, and receive my entire liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I am, all that I have, Thou hast given me, and I give it back again to Thee, to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. Give me only Thy love and Thy grace ; with these I am rich enough, nor do I ask for aught besides.

“ *Sume* ” take, O Lord, for Thou art the

* St. Mark xiii.

Creator; Thou hast an absolute sovereignty over Thy creatures the work of Thy Hands. Shall man dare to say to Thee when Thou takest back Thine own, "Why hast Thou done so to us?"

"*Suscipe*" receive, my God, the offering which I make to Thee; though I can only give Thee that which is Thine, yet Thou dost condescend to receive it—nay, even to ask for gifts from me. "Son, give Me thy heart." Take and receive it, my God and Father, I yield myself up entirely to Thy pleasure. "Ask of me what Thou wilt, and I will give it Thee." To each of Thy sinful children Thou canst truly say: "Behold I have given thee according to thy words . . . yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask I have given thee."

How then can I refuse Thee that which Thou gavest me so freely?

"*Suscipe universam meam libertatem*," take my liberty that I prize so highly, that liberty which Thou gavest me that I might render Thee willing obedience and service. How often have I misused this precious gift, how many sins have I thus

committed? Take my liberty lest it degenerate into license. Henceforth may :—

“ I seek no other liberty
But that of being bound to Thee.”

“The free will offerings of my mouth, make acceptable, O Lord.” Let it be a whole burnt offering; I give it back into Thy hands content to use it henceforth for Thee alone, and as I offer my oblation let me hear Thy loving response : “ I am the Lord that keep it . . . lest any hurt come to it, I will keep it night and day.”

“ *Accipe memoriam* ” receive my memory. Do Thou bless and sanctify it. Engrave Thy words there, and :

“ May memory no thought suggest
But shall to Thy pure glory tend.”

How often in the past have I made my memory an instrument of sin? Instead of remembering “the words of the Lord Jesus,” I have been mindful only of the maxims of the world. I have forgotten “to do good and to impart” while my personal interests have been ever present. Henceforth let my memory be all for Thee, may it be used only for Thy good pleasure and if it should please Thee to ask me

to sacrifice it before the hour of death, give me grace to say "Thy will be done."

"*Accipe intellectum*" receive my understanding, may I never more misuse this precious gift. May I submit my intelligence to the teaching of Thy Church? Accept my understanding; do Thou enlighten it lest I walk in darkness. Pardon me for the sins I have committed through pride of intellect, and in future do Thou blessed Spirit of God "guide our minds with Thy blest light," and "through all perils lead us safe beneath Thy sacred wing."

"*Accipe voluntatem omnem*," receive my whole will, I yield it up to Thee. "Not my will but Thine be done." Forgive me for the times when I have perversely turned aside from keeping Thy commandments when "pride ruled my will; remember not past years." Now, my God, my heart is ready; I am wholly Thine. Do Thou take, what I have not the courage to give; "teach me to do Thy will, and strengthen me to fulfil it perfectly."

"*Quidquid habeo, vel possideo, mihi largitus es*": All that I have or possess is Thy

gift. When the hour of death shall sound for me, Thou wilt exact the sacrifice of all ; I give Thee freely now, what Thou wilt require then. I give Thee my senses ; if Thou shouldst ask me to sacrifice one or more, even before the hour of my death, give me the strength to yield it Thee generously. Take each sense, when and as Thou wilt : I give them back to Thee to be disposed of according to Thy good pleasure. If it be Thy will to deprive me of the goods of this world, or of the love of creatures, or to call hence those dear to me, then help me to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away : as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done : blessed be the name of the Lord.”*

“*Amorem tui solum . . . mihi dones ;*” then “*dives sum satis*,” I am rich enough : with Thy love I shall be rich for time and eternity ; love softens every sacrifice, “for love is strong as death. . . . Many waters cannot quench charity.” Do Thou, blessed Spirit of God, grant me to put on “the breastplate of faith and charity.” Let me not love only “in word or in tongue,”

* Job i.

but “in deed and in truth.” Heavenly Father, fill my soul with Thy love, may it overflow on my neighbours that my charity may be perfect.

“*Cum gratia tua*”—“With Thy grace I can do all things.” Let me feel that “underneath are the Everlasting Arms” ever sustaining Thy weak and sinful child. With Thee I can face the enemies of my soul; may I never lose Thy grace by mortal sin, nor weaken it by venial sins. With each temptation may Thy grace supply “the way of escape” that I may be able to bear it.

“*Nec aliud quidquam ultra posco*,” I ask nothing more :—

“Grant me to love Thee as I ought :
Thou givest all in giving this.”

With the help of Thy grace I make Thee freely the sacrifice of my life; I give back to Thee each sense, each faculty. I accept death with all its pangs, when and as Thou shalt think fit to call me. Thou art my loving Father, canst Thou do aught that is not for the good of Thy child? Accept my oblation, and as the hour of my departure is not, so far as I know, close at hand, I

promise during the rest of my life to devote myself body and soul to Thy service. "Two things I have asked of Thee, deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me, vanity and lying words. "Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessities of life."* Grant me to trade till Thou comest with the talents Thou hast given me, that I may merit to hear the welcome word, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Sume et suscipe"—Take and receive
O Lord :

*"All, yes, all—I would not pilfer
From my holocaust a part,
Every thought, word, deed and feeling,
Every beating of my heart.
Thine till death, and then for ever,
My heart's cry in Heaven shall be :
Omnia pro Te Cor Jesu !
Heart of Jesus ! all for Thee !"*

7. AN ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but say only the word " and my soul shall be healed. Thou didst come into the world to give us

* Prov. xxv.

life and light, I pray Thee grant me a deeper spiritual life and enlighten me, that I may know and do Thy holy Will.

“Lamb of God, Who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me.” My God, I adore Thee spiritually present in my inmost soul.

“*Anima Christi, sanctifica me!*” Soul of Christ, sanctify me. Let my soul ever be a holy temple consecrated to Thee. Sanctify my thoughts, words, and deeds, that they may be all for Thee. Sanctify my sorrows, that they may be stepping-stones on my heavenward road.

“*Corpus Christi, salva me!*” Body of Christ, save me. Precious Body, which I have so often received in Holy Communion, save me from the power of the evil one, save me from the tyranny of my own evil passions.

Body of Christ, scourged and crucified for me, save me.

“*Sanguis Christi, inebria me.*” Blood of Christ, inebriate me. Jesus, Master, may the sacred words be realised in me: “I have inebriated the weary soul, and I have filled every hungry soul.” Blood of Christ,

inebriate my weary soul, fill my hungry soul lest I faint by the way, ere I reach the goal.

Aqua lateris Christi, lava me." Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Make me as pure as when the baptismal waters regenerated my soul in holy baptism. Saviour, Thou didst deliver Thyself up for Thy church, that Thou mightest "sanctify it by the laver of water in the word of life," and Thou didst present it to Thyself, "a glorious church not having a spot or wrinkle." Water from the side of Christ, cleanse my sinful soul that it may "be holy and without blemish."

Passio Christi, conforta me." Passion of Christ, comfort me. Be my consolation at the hour of death. O Jesus, may Thy bitter passion and desolation of soul, be my comfort in the hour of trial. Passion of Christ, comfort me when I repent.

"O bone Jesu, exaudi me." O good Jesus, hear me when I call upon Thee. My God, I believe Thy promise, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify Me." Saviour, hear

me and come speedily to my assistance. "O God, hear my prayer, give ear to the words of my mouth."

"Intra tua vulnera, absconde me." Within Thy wounds hide me. As of old, Moses hid in the cleft of the rock and was there protected by God's right hand, so may I be hidden in Thy Sacred Wounds, the clefts in the Rock of Ages. Within Thy Wounds, hide me, Saviour, that henceforth my life may be hidden with Thee in God.

"Ne permittas me separari a Te." Let me not be separated from Thee, my Lord and my God. May I never be deprived of Thy grace, that precious bond which unites the soul to Thee. Let me not be separated from Thee by sin. Grant that trial, so far from driving me from Thee may but make me cling all the more firmly to Thy pierced Hand.

"Ab hoste maligno defende me." From the malignant enemy defend me. Shield me from his assaults, or enable me to sustain them. Give Thy angels charge over me to keep me in all my ways. Above all defend

me from the temptations of the devil in my last agony.

“*In hora mortis meæ, voca me, et jube me venire ad Te.*” In the hour of my death call me. Let me hear Thy gentle voice, bidding me come to Thee. Let me see Thee standing on the shores of eternity waiting to welcome Thy child home. Grant that I may be always prepared to hear Thy call, help me to “watch and pray,” since I know not the hour of Thy coming. Bid me come to Thee, never again to be separated from Thee.

“*Ut cum Sanctis tuis, laudem Te in sæcula sæculorum.*” That with Thy Saints I may praise Thee for all eternity. Grant me to follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest, and to join in “the great multitude that no man can number.” With them and with all who are dear to me, may I praise Thee face to face, and contemplate Thy infinite perfections for all eternity. Amen.

8. RULE OF LIFE.

Rising exactly at () in summer, ()

in winter, offering of my thoughts, words, deeds, and sufferings of the day to God.

Prayers. I will say them before commencing work, and, kneeling before the crucifix, will renew my intention to fight against my besetting sin.

Meditation. At the hour determined () o'clock. I will meditate during the space of () hour. I will not shorten it on account of aridity, and will always take some practical resolution.

Holy Mass. I will hear Mass daily if possible, or at least () times a week (specify the days.) Bad weather alone shall not habitually be an excuse for staying at home.

Spiritual Reading. I will make this daily during () minutes, reading slowly and prayerfully.

Visit to the Blssed Sacrament. I will make this daily if possible, and will never pass the Church without making an interior act of adoration if I cannot spare time to go in.

Rosary. I will say the Rosary daily, or at least () decades.

Evening Prayers. I will say them punctually at () o'clock (with my family if that depends on me). In this case the spiritual reading, and a decade or two of the Rosary, will form part of the devotions.

Examination of Conscience. I will examine my conscience daily, and be careful to make my particular examination at least every evening.

Sacraments. *Confession* every () after having made a serious preparation. *Holy Communion* as often as my confessor permits. I will endeavour to make my preparation and thanksgiving carefully.

Temptations. I will avoid the occasions of sin especially (), endeavouring to resist the temptation promptly, calmly, and vigorously. After a fall, I will make a sincere act of contrition and renew my firm purpose of amendment. Whatever sin I fall into I will never be discouraged.

Trials. When God sends sickness or sorrow, I will endeavour to receive it as a present from our loving Father, and to abstain from murmuring and rebelling

against God. In spite of the weakness of the flesh, my cry shall be :—

“Nearer my God to Thee. Nearer to Thee,
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.”

In trials that come through creatures, I will see God's hand, and be ready to forgive and forget injuries as a means of obtaining mercy for my own sins.

Mortification. I will choose some definite acts of mortification, and be faithful to them (daily or weekly), especially on Fridays and during the penitential seasons.

Meals. I will avoid daintiness, complaining about my food, excess in quantity or extravagance in quality. I will observe (if possible) the fasts and abstinence imposed by the Church. If dispensed by my confessor, I will substitute some other acts of mortification. I will say my grace openly, when it is prudent to do so.

Sleep. I will go to bed at () o'clock, and will endeavour to let my last thoughts be not only for God but of God.

Work. I will avoid losing my time or wasting it on futile occupations. “Duty before pleasure” shall be one of my mottos.

I will begin my work punctually, doing it well “as to the Lord,” and will always put first the duties of my state of life. If possible I will have a definite time allotted for each duty, and will try to find time at least daily (or weekly) to do something for the poor, or to help in some good work (specify).

I will not be afraid of putting my hand to housework when necessary.

I will not give more than () hours daily to light reading, and will carefully avoid all books which attack Christian faith or morals.

I will also be most careful to do well any work for which I am paid.

HOME LIFE.—*For Parents.* True love of their children, shewn by watchfulness over their faith and morals ; carefulness to inculcate a Christian spirit, courage to correct them when necessary, giving them a good example, watching over their companions.

Towards servants. Patience, kindness and justice.

For children. To be obedient, loving and respectful to parents ; to help to maintain them if necessary ; to bear with their

infirmities, to speak of them with respect; to strive to keep peace and unity with brothers and sisters; to put them before friends.

Friends and companions. I will avoid those who would lead me into sin, and having chosen a true friend, will try to "bear and forbear."

Use of money. I will decide how much I can devote to God, my neighbour, and myself. As regards dress, I will keep to what is befitting my station in life, and will avoid dressing to attract attention. (It is a good rule "not to be the first to adopt a new fashion, nor the last to leave it off.") I will keep well within my income.

Means of perseverance. To make a monthly retreat on the () of the month. To join some sodality and faithfully observe the rules. To attend the week-day benedictions. To make a yearly retreat. To keep the same director as far as possible.

LAUS TIBI, DOMINE.

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The Retreat Manual

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